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Abstract

This thesis identifies key aspects of the nature of holiness present in the life of seventh-century Saint Aldhelm present in three fifteenth-century Middle English versions of versions of the *Legenda aurea*. From its first inception in thirteenth-century Genoa the *Legenda aurea*'s popularity spread throughout Europe, where it was translated, with local saints added depending on the prevalent cult at the time. When the codex arrived in England hagiographical texts and legendaries had already flourished, yet, the original *Legenda aurea* only held two accounts of English Saints, that of Thomas of Canterbury, plus The Eleven Thousand Virgins involving Saint Ursula.

As the *Legenda aurea* became translated into Middle English, as with its counterparts in Europe, English saints were added, principally from the south of England. One of these saints was Aldhelm. Despite his popularity waning after his initial appearance in text by Bede in the eighth century, Aldhelm re-emerged in the twelfth century with two accounts of his life by Faricius of Abingdon and William of Malmesbury. This thesis explores those original versions of Aldhelm's life in order to determine what it is about the nature of his holiness that deems him then to appear specifically in the English tradition of the *Legenda aurea*.

**In his Nature To Be So: Holiness in the Life of Saint
Aldhelm Included in Middle English
Versions of the *Legenda Aurea***

Sandra M. Elliott

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of
The requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

There are no ethics implications for this thesis

I declare that the wordcount of this thesis is 82,913

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Date: 02/12/2020

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Abbreviations

MS	Manuscript
MSS	Manuscripts
SEL	The South English Legendary

Description of Manuscripts

The Abbotsford House Manuscript *Legenda Aurea* (1443–1449)

Lambeth Palace MS 72 *Gilte Legende* (1438)

The British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.11 c.16 Caxton's Printed Edition as the *Golden Legende* (1498)

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Acknowledgements

It is with grateful acknowledgment that I was given kind permission by the Faculty of Advocates Abbotsford Collection Trust to consult, transcribe and photograph the Abbotsford House Manuscript the *Legenda aurea*. I would also wish to acknowledge the kind permission allowed me by Lambeth Palace to consult, transcribe and photograph MS 72, the *Gilte Legende*. I also acknowledge kind permission of The British Library to consult, transcribe and photograph the British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.11 c.16 Caxton's printed edition as the *Golden Legende*.

I would like to thank with the utmost gratitude my supervisors Lesley Twomey and Carlos Condes Solares, without whose unfailing support and patience this fascinating research journey would not have been possible.

Chapter one

Introduction

‘We pray to you, Saint Augustine of Canterbury,
and to all the Benedictine monks and nuns
whose prayer in this land through the centuries
left in so many ways and in so many places
the mark of God’s presence
and the memory of holiness’.¹

Anonymous

Introduction

In the *Saint Benedict’s Prayer book*, produced by the Benedictine monks of Ampleforth Abbey, lies perhaps a little known prayer outside of such monastic confines, the Prayer to the Benedictine Saints of ‘this land’, the geographical location of Britain, see above. Beginning its reverential invocation, the prayer first turns to the most famous Benedictine monk to bless the shores of England, Augustine. Yet, as the prayer continues there were other worthy members of the Order, from its initial burgeoning on British soil in the sixth century to the following early medieval period that deem, if not supplication for intercession, at least acknowledgement. The Benedictine saint which is the focus of this thesis is Saint Aldhelm (639–709).

¹ Ampleforth Abbey Trustees, *Saint Benedict’s Prayer Book* (Ampleforth: Ampleforth Abbey Press: 1993), p. 129.

Research Context

The aim of this study is to discover testimony of the ‘the mark of God’s presence’ revealed in the nature of holiness present in a comparison of the life of Saint Aldhelm (639–709) in three fifteenth-century Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*: the Abbotsford House Manuscript (1443–1449), the Lambeth Palace MS 72 (1438), and the British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.11 c.16 Caxton’s printed edition as the *Golden Legende*, imprint date (1498).

The objective is to transcribe each codex and analyse in detail how the ‘memory of holiness’ portrays the specific nature of that holiness in Aldhelm’s personality traits and in his supernatural acts of the miraculous. A consideration will be made regarding the content and style of each text, their inclusions and omissions and the focus upon which each document advocates the nature of Aldhelm’s holiness. The original sources of accounts of the life of Aldhelm will be explored in order to establish the nature of the saint’s holiness at the initial stages of written testimony, and how this compares to the later fifteenth-century versions. Reference to Aldhelm first appears in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* (731 AD), then not until four hundred years later does Aldhelm emerge in Faricius of Abingdon’s († 1117) *Vita S. Aldhelmi*, and in William of Malmesbury’s (1095–1143) *De gesta pontificum anglorum*. Both Faricius and William have affinity with Aldhelm as he was the patron saint of their monastic house.

Saint Aldhelm

Saint Aldhelm was a scion of the Royal House of Wessex and became a notable figure in the history of Anglo-Saxon monasticism and learning.² A prolific writer of notable renown, Aldhelm penned such works as *De virginitate*, in praise of virginity, and his *Enigmata*

² Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, trans., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 1–10.

which is a collection of intriguing Anglo-Saxon riddles.³ Educated at the Benedictine monastery at Malmesbury, Aldhelm was appointed in due course as Abbot there where he developed a reputation for a devotion to classical learning. As Abbot, Aldhelm journeyed on pilgrimage to Rome where he spent a considerable amount of time with Pope Sergius, returning with privileges for both his monastery at Malmesbury and the royal households of West Sussex and Mercia.⁴ Yet, more pertinent to the purpose of this study is the supernatural gift with which he returned, the sacred ability to perform the miraculous. As the codices studied in this thesis will reveal, it appears to have been Aldhelm's pilgrimage to the Holy City that was a catalyst for the nature of his holiness to not only be revealed in his personality traits such as bodily abstinence and prayer, but to be given 'the mark of God's presence', as mentioned in the prayer above, evident in the intangible aura of his miracles, accompanied by the tangible quality of relics retained from the miraculous events. Two objects preserved as evidence of the miraculous events performed by Aldhelm, in both Rome and later in Britain, graced the monastery at Malmesbury for many years in the form of relics, a chasuble and a Bible. As will be seen in Chapter Four, Aldhelm's miracles and consequent relics are attested to by both Faricius of Abingdon and William of Malmesbury.

In his later years, Aldhelm became confessor to Brightwolde the Archbishop of Canterbury, with his final ecclesiastical appointment as Bishop of Sherborne.⁵ It appears that, on the surface, Aldhelm's legacy is that of royal lineage, scholarly prowess and ecclesiastical promotion. Yet, whilst Michael Lapidge and Andy Orchard attest to Aldhelm's life and literary accomplishments, the specific nature of his holiness is not addressed. I was first drawn to the choice of Saint Aldhelm, for the purpose of this study, as I was researching the MS 72 at Lambeth Palace library in search of an English saint to study within Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*. I had encountered this saint before and became curious to find out more about him. The choice of English versions of the *Legenda aurea* was due to a somewhat disquieting discovery that in Voragine's original there are only two accounts of English

³ Andy Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1–4.

⁴ David Preest, trans., *William of Malmesbury The Deeds of the Bishops of England* ('*De gesta pontificum anglorum*') (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), p. 253.

⁵ Michael Lapidge, and Michael Herren, trans., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 9–10.

saints, they are Thomas of Canterbury, and The Eleven Thousand Virgins involving Saint Ursula. This is despite England by the thirteenth century having numerous saints of local, national and European renown.

Methodology and Outline Structure

The thematic methodology of this study follows the comparative model employed by Anthony Bale and A.S.G. Edwards in their transcriptional analysis of the lives of saints Edmund and Saint Fremund written by John Lydgate (1370–1451) from the British Library the MS Harley 2278 and the Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 46.⁶ The documents had been previously transcribed by Carl Horstmann in 1881 and Francis Hervey in 1907 yet, neither manuscript had been analysed. Bale and Edwards's study revealed in particular extra miracles added to the lives of Saint Edmund and Fremund. Whilst this thesis follows the methodological model offered by Bale and Edwards, it differs in that the relatively contemporaneous written texts are that of three Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea* containing the life of Saint Aldhelm, none of which had previously been transcribed nor analysed.

Chapter Two begins with an examination of Jacobus de Voragine's (1228–1298) the *Legenda aurea* itself, its origin, purpose, structure and dissemination from a European perspective. The literature review explores the fascination of this codex that has been studied by such seminal writers as Sherry L. Reames who, amongst other works, considered the *Legenda aurea* as a whole and its contribution to society, as well as examining the individual life of Saint Martin of Tours both before he blessed the pages of the codex and in its representation of him.⁷ More recently, Giovanni Paolo Maggioni focuses upon the relationship between

⁶ Anthony Bale and A. S. G. Edwards, *John Lydgate's Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund and the Extra Miracles of St Edmund: Edited from British Library MS Harley 2278 and Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 46*, Middle English Texts 41, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2009), pp. 11–29. See also, for example model of comparison table: Gleb Schmidt, 'A Saint Petersburg Manuscript of the *Excerptio Roberti Herefordensis de Chronica Mariani Scotti*', pp. 69–92, in Laura Cleaver and Andrea Worm, eds., *Writing History in the Anglo-Norman World: Manuscripts, Makers, and Readers, c. 1066–c. 1250*, (York: York Medieval Press, 2018).

⁷ Sherry L. Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Re-examination of its Paradoxical History* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 3–8.
Sherry L. Reames, 'Saint Martin of Tours in the *Legenda Aurea* and Before', *Viator*, 12 (1981): 131–164.

Voragine's sermons and the content of the *Legenda aurea*, which were written contemporaneously.⁸

An initial definition of sainthood is explored within the context of the *Legenda aurea*, considering the inclusion of individual lives such as that of Saint Silvester, to the collective of The Holy Innocents, to the all-encompassing inclusion of All Saints, which Voragine himself justifies as incorporated to ensure all of the saints were included and none left out, thus affording accessibility for the faithful to pray for generic intercession to all the saints at once.⁹ Voragine further qualifies the inclusion of All Saints by stating that it is to coincide with the consecration of an ecclesiastical building. Eamon Duffy, in his introduction to the 2012 edition of an English translation of the *Legenda aurea*, points to the evangelical purpose of its composition.¹⁰

The purpose of Voragine's religious calling to the Dominican Order had the *Legenda aurea* echo the evangelical goal of the Order's philosophy, rather than a cloistered sect such as the Benedictine Order, this was reflected in his choice of Latin Vulgate, everyman's Latin, as opposed to the more archaic and relatively incomprehensible Latin that would have perhaps diluted its appeal. Jacques Le Goff focuses upon the structure of the *Legenda aurea* and the relationship between time, number, the *temporal* and the *sanctoral*, which relates to the spiritual journey of the reader or read to.¹¹ The *Legenda aurea* became such a popular preaching device that it became disseminated across late medieval Europe, which saw its original Latin Vulgate *composition* translated into such languages as Catalan and Langue d'Oc. Marinela Garcia Sempere's recent study of the content of Catalan versions of The *Legenda aurea* notes that all compilations contain saints not in the original, such as Saint Paula.¹² An-

⁸ Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, 'Chastity Models in the *Legenda Aurea* and in the *Sermones de Sanctis* of Jacobus de Voragine', *Medieval Sermon Studies* 52.1 (2008): 19–30.

⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 658.

¹⁰ Eamon Duffy, 'Introduction to the 2012 Edition', in *Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend Readings on the Saints*, trans. and ed. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. xi–xx.

¹¹ Jacques Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time: Jacobus Voragine and the 'Golden Legend'*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 7.

¹² Marinela Garcia Sempere, 'On Manuscripts of the *Legenda Aurea* in Catalan', *Medievalia* (Barcelona, Spain) 18.2 (2015): 155–178.

drew M. Beresford highlights the various translations into Castilian as the *Gran flos sanctorum*.¹³ Beresford points out inconsistencies in style and content across the translations, for example containing in excess of two hundred lives, reflect the changing definition of sanctity. B. Bussell Thompson and John K. Walsh offer evidence of textual diversity in their index of the *Gran flos sanctorum* Compilation A, also Beresford who indexes Compilation B with particular attention to Saint Agatha and Saint Lucy.¹⁴ Therefore, as the *Legenda aurea* spread across Europe local saints, more relevant to the readership and community, became added. In essence, the locality took the *Legenda aurea* and, whilst more or less maintaining its original structure and content, made it their own. However, the original inception of the *Legenda aurea*, containing no fewer than 153 saints, mainly Early Desert Fathers, but also containing Saint Peter of Verona, a Dominican contemporaneous with Voragine, only included two narratives of saints from the island of Britain, Thomas of Canterbury which is located as Voragine's chapter 11, and The Eleven Thousand Virgins involving the life of Saint Ursula which is located as Voragine's chapter 158.¹⁵ Yet, by the thirteenth century, the decade of its composition, hagiographical tradition in, what was by that time England, was well formed.

Chapter Three considers the hagiographical tradition already established in early medieval Britain, and the subsequent late medieval arrival of the *Legenda aurea* to its shores. Considered by many to be the foremost early hagiographical work in England is Bede's (673–735) the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* [the Ecclesiastical History of the English People]. The text incorporates lives of saints and a chronicle of its time incorporating royal allegiances and disputes to brutal acts of war and martyrdom, to occurrences of the miraculous engendered by saints both during their lifetime and after their passing.

English hagiographic tradition appeared in both prose and verse in such as the *Old English Martyrology*, noted by Christine Rauer to contain both English and continental

¹³ Beresford, 'Dreams of Death in Medieval Castilian Hagiography: Martyrdom and Ideology in the *Gran Flos Sanctorum*', *La Corónica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures and Cultures*, 42.1 (2013), pp. 159–184.

¹⁴ B. Bussell Thompson and John K. Walsh. 'Old Spanish Manuscripts of Prose Lives of the Saints and their Affiliations, I: Compilation A (the *Gran flos sanctorum*)', *La Corónica*, 15 (1986–87): 17–28. Beresford, Andrew M. *The Severed Breast: The Legends of Saints Agatha and Lucy in Medieval Castilian Literature*. Newark DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2010, pp.15–46; 59–99.

¹⁵ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, pp. 59–62, pp. 644–46.

saints' lives which were written in the latter part of the ninth century.¹⁶ In his study on identity, Hugh M. Thomas informs that in the later Post-Norman era initial dismissal of the Anglo-Saxon saints later saw Norman encouragement of their promotion, perhaps a strategy for the conquerors to placate their subjects, which in turn caused the local communities to cling to the memories of their early Anglo-Saxon saints, subsequently reforging their identity.¹⁷ Thus, the cult of the Anglo-Saxon saints survived and further cultivated pilgrimage communities and sites.¹⁸

Chapter Four explores themes in hagiography that have been studied which could be applied to the search for the nature of Aldhelm's holiness in the three fifteenth-century Middle English Versions of the *Legenda aurea*. Such themes explored include the role of memory in accounts of saints' lives, from oral tradition to the written word, also post-Conquest identity and nostalgic memory of the Anglo-Saxon saints as offered by Matthew Innes.¹⁹ Geographical context also played a key role in both European and English saints as explored by André Vauchez and Brigitte Cazelles, who point out that the south west of Europe tended to favour the lay saint or one drawn from commoner stock, whereas the north tended more towards those of noble lineage.²⁰ As Aldhelm is of royal blood this is relevant to status and renown as a saint.

Chapter Five embarks on a comparison of the original sources of accounts of Aldhelm, namely Bede's the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* [the Ecclesiastical History of

¹⁶ Christine Rauer, ed. and trans., *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation, and Commentary*, Anglo-Saxon Texts, 10 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2016), pp. 1–30.

¹⁷ Hugh M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity 1066–1220* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 20.

¹⁸ Eamon Duffy, 'The Dynamics of Pilgrimage in Late Medieval England', in Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 166.

¹⁹ Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, eds., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1–8. See also, Catherine Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of Early Anglo-Saxon Saints', in Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, eds., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 29–66. Among others.

²⁰ André Vauchez, 'Lay People's Sanctity in Western Europe: Evolution of a Pattern (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)', in Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell, eds., *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 21–33. See also, Brigitte Cazelles, 'Introduction', in Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell, eds., *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 1–17.

the English People]. written a mere twenty two years after Aldhelm's death.²¹ Not until four hundred years later in the twelfth century does Aldhelm re-emerge in Faricius of Abingdon's the *Vita S. Aldhelmi* [the Life of Saint Aldhelm], and later in the same century William of Malmesbury's *De gesta pontificum anglorum* [The Deeds of the Bishops of England].²² Note that Faricius titles his work on Saint Aldhelm as a *vita*, as opposed to a *passio* as Aldhelm did not die a martyr's death.²³ Bede's brief mention of Aldhelm is markedly different in style and content to Faricius and William. It is not an account of the life of the saint *per se*, more a commentary on a bishop who was an accomplished academic and writer that Bede offers. There is no mention of the nature of his holiness, no mention of miracles, even though the majority of Bede's work is replete with them, and no mention of Aldhelm's pilgrimage to Rome. Surprisingly, Bede's usual allegorical style is not employed when writing of Aldhelm. In contrast, Faricius of Abingdon and William of Malmesbury's accounts are lengthy and in praise of Aldhelm in the extreme, with Faricius engendering Aldhelm with qualities such as patience reflecting those of biblical characters, Faricius's liberal application of exegesis differs from William of Malmesbury's as his account, whilst lengthy, is more of an account of Aldhelm's life and times, as befitting a book recounting deeds of the bishops of England. Both, however, mention the quality of Aldhelm's holiness, and give accounts of his pilgrimage to Rome and his miracles. Yet, as this chapter will demonstrate, the texts are by no means identical in content, nor are they in style.

With the original writings on Aldhelm established, Chapters Six and Seven compare then analyse the three fifteenth-century Middle English codices of the *Legenda aurea*: the Abbotsford House MS (1443–1449), the Lambeth Palace MS 72 (1438), and Caxton's printed edition as the *Golden Legende*, in order to establish any connection of content and style with the original versions in Chapter Six. The documents are categorised into sections of events in Aldhelm's life, which may correspond to similar categories in the original texts. A consideration is made of priority of content as well as events in Aldhelm's life that are included or not present, also if any identical phrases appear across the documents pointing to similar sources.

²¹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Leo Shirley-Price, revised by R.E. Latham, (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 298–299.

²² J.A. Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera quae extant Omnia e codicibus Mss emendavit: Saint Aldhelm, John Capgrave, Faricius (Abbot of Abbingdon), Patres ecclesiae anglicanae*, 1, (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1844), p. 356–382. Preest, *Gesta*, pp. 223–265.

The codices are then analysed in Chapter Seven for evidence of the nature of holiness in their accounts of Aldhelm's life. Each established event marked by sections in Aldhelm's life are analysed with respect to themes explored in Chapter Four pertaining to the nature of Aldhelm's holiness, from his royal lineage to the geographical relevance of Malmesbury in relation to its close proximity to Canterbury and the Via Francigena pilgrimage route to Rome. The nature of Aldhelm's holiness is then drawn out specifically with relation to his personality traits and miracles portrayed in each text. Chapter Eight provides the full transcription of each text that was carried out *in situ* at the National Library of Scotland, Lambeth Palace Library, and the British Library, followed by a comparison table of each of the corresponding designated sections in each of the texts.

Conclusion

There follows an examination of the contextualisation and dissemination of the *Legenda aurea* in hagiographical tradition in medieval Europe. This is to establish the essence of the texts' intent and appeal throughout the continent considering the European contextualisation and dissemination, structure and purpose, and possible translations and redactions. The purpose of which is to ultimately lay the groundwork for its arrival in England.

Chapter Two

Contextualisation and Dissemination of The *Golden Legend* in Hagiographical Tradition in Medieval Europe

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the contextualisation and dissemination of the *Legenda aurea* in hagiographical tradition throughout continental Europe in the late medieval period. Consideration will be made regarding translations, redactions, and additions to the original *Legenda aurea* manuscript, as it was translated and disseminated in the European tradition, and possible reasons for local differences will be examined. The purpose of the codex will be explored in light of its Dominican author's rubric evident in its *temporal* and *sanctoral* structure. Within the scope of the chapter an initial definition of sainthood will be explored in the context of the *Legenda aurea*, as well as the category of saint employed from early Desert Fathers to laity in the medieval era and the possible social and political reasons for their inclusion.

European Contextualisation and Dissemination

The *Golden Legend* or the *Legenda aurea* was written by Jacobus de Voragine (1229–1298) Bishop of Genoa, in the thirteenth century. The manuscript was composed to support the monastic cause advocated by the Dominican philosophy of evangelisation, as opposed to the closed monastic life of such as those following the Benedictine rule.¹ The *Legenda aurea* was founded on the work of Jean de Mailly and Bartholomew of Trent who each had produced a previous legendary in the early thirteenth-century.² Possibly the most copied book in medieval Europe, second only to the Bible, the *Legenda aurea* can be considered a major spiritual and cultural influence from its emergence in the thirteenth century to its extensive readership by the sixteenth century.³

¹ Eamon Duffy, 'Introduction to the 2012 Edition', in *Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend Readings on the Saints*, trans. and ed. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. xi–xx.

² Jacques Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time: Jacobus Voragine and the 'Golden Legend'*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 7.

³ Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time*, p.12.

A legendary can be defined and distinguished from historiography or chronicles, such as *The Brut*, in that the account within relates specifically to lives of saints. What distinguishes the *Golden Legend* from legendaries is that it also contains feast days and seasons of the Church's year, such as the feast of the Epiphany and the season of Advent, which are intertwined with the feast days of the saints. Thus, it can be viewed as a spiritual handbook for the faithful to guide them through the liturgical year with the guidance of the saint supporting their spiritual journey, in other words a framework for society.⁴

Structure and Purpose

A variety of areas have been explored regarding the structure and purpose of the *Legenda aurea*. Le Goff focuses upon Voragine and his emphasis on the theme of 'time' within the *Legenda aurea*. Le Goff postulates that Voragine's text is separated into five distinct segments of time, not as a chronological countdown in the life of an individual but more as a sectioning of the life of humanity reflected in the individual's relationship with the Divine.⁵ This spiritual journey in time travels from the Time of Renewal, reflected in Advent and relating to the time when humanity first turns away from sins of the flesh, towards spiritual renewal. This process then continues with the Time of Reconciliation and Pilgrimage, to a further Deviation echoed in Lent, to a Time of Reconciliation present in Easter, the Ascension and Pentecost, and a final Time of Pilgrimage which contains just short of one hundred saints, including the Virgin Mary. Each Time is punctuated by examples of saints whose lives fit with and reflect each period. In this way, this *summa* of the *temporal* and the *sanctoral*, according to Le Goff, provide a guiding and stabilising influence for humanity as well as an inspiration for deeper spirituality.

Whilst stating that cults of saints and monastic influence undoubtedly affected the phenomena of addition of local saints to copies and later versions of the *Legenda aurea*, W. Williams-Krapp claims that Voragine's original text contained 170 lives, creating a void in which to fill the further 195 days of a 365-day calendar year with local saint's lives.⁶ Le Goff

⁴ Sherry L. Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Re-examination of its Paradoxical History*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985)pp. 3–8.

⁵ Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time*, pp. 33–181.

⁶ W. Williams-Krapp, 'German and Dutch Translations of the *Legenda aurea*', in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international*

posits that the numerical significance of Voragine limiting the number of saints' lives in his text to 153 is symbolic of the amount of fish the disciples caught when instructed by Jesus to cast their nets as recorded in Saint John's Gospel in the New Testament:⁷ 'Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken' John 21:11.⁸

Giovanni Maggioni points out that Voragine's application of Latin Vulgate in the *Legenda aurea* not only made the codex more accessible as a preaching device for other pastors, but also proved it to be a best seller of its day in aiding preachers to inform and instruct the laity in the examples of saintly living, accessibly presented in the lives themselves.⁹ Maggioni indicates that Voragine's readily available sermon models to be preached on various saints' days, written contemporaneously with the *Legenda aurea*, added to his fellow preachers' evangelical arsenal.¹⁰ Steven Epstein also indicates that Voragine's sermons were intended to be realigned by pastors to suit the needs of their flock.¹¹ Yet, the question which needs to be raised at this juncture is what can be defined as a saint's life within the *Legenda aurea*? Furthermore, this then lends itself to the broader definition of sainthood *per se*, which will be explored in detail later in this thesis. Within the context of Voragine's text the anomalies arise from attempting to ascertain the number of lives in both individual and collective accounts. The answer with regard to the *Legenda aurea* could be as simple as considering the title of each life or lives. For example, in William Granger Ryan's 1993 translation: 'Saint Andrew, Apostle' is clearly the life of a single Saint, similarly 'Saint Felix'.¹² However, the lives of 'Saint Peter and Paul' are recorded together as one, as with 'Saint Quiricus and his mother Saint Julitta', which could pose a numerical quandary; are

sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires. (11–12 mai 1983) (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 227–232.

⁷ Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time*, p. 166.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, The Queen's printer, under royal letters patent, no date), p. 1077.

⁹ Giovanni Paolo Maggioni and Francesco Stella, 'Introduzione', *Legenda aurea: Con le Miniatore dal Codice Ambrosiano C 240 INF. Vol. 1*, (Bottai [Impuneta]: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo 1998), pp. xvii–xx.

¹⁰ Maggioni, Giovanni Paolo, 'Chastity Models in the *Legenda Aurea* and in the *Sermones De Sanctis* of Jacobus De Voragine.' *Medieval Sermon Studies* MMS 52.1 (2008): 19–30.

¹¹ Stephen A. Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Varagine: A Genoese Mind in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), p. 12.

¹² Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 13–658.

these counted as the lives of individual saint, or should they be defined as individual accounts ? Besides, the seemingly paradoxical situation of being confronted with the ‘Seven Sleepers’, and ultimately ‘All Saints’ creates a further dilemma as to how to count, or account for, the individual saint within the *Legenda aurea*. Although, in his own defence, or moreover explanation, Voragine himself, at the beginning of his section on ‘All Saints’ explains the inclusion as ultimately being certain that no saint was overlooked.¹³ Moreover, Voragine also demonstrates acknowledgement and access to those saints who were perhaps venerated locally that the mainstream community of which it may not be aware.

Nevertheless, this allocation of saint either in the singular or collectively appears to be quite arbitrary. As whilst Voragine is clearly relating to time, the *temporal* and *sanctoral*, the prime aim of the *Legenda aurea* was not to be yet another collection of saint’s lives, a saint for every day, but a spiritual guide to the liturgical year; a combination of saints’ days and liturgical feast days such as Advent and Lent, thereby the calendar, the 365 days, was indeed full, as opposed to Williams-Krapp’s claim. The original intent of the *Legenda aurea* was perhaps to create cohesion and structure for the lay spiritual community, as well as to invite those with no spiritual tendencies; creating and providing a sense of time; a looking forward to the liturgical year, rather than a set list of saints for the year. The *Temporal* and the *Sanctoral*, the worldly and spiritual realms, are thereby intertwined in order to attempt to bring sanctifying solace to everyday life and influences experienced by ordinary people. In this regard, Le Goff can be considered as highlighting an unassuming yet significant phenomena within the pages of the *Legenda aurea* both in terms of time and numerical symbolism.

Whereas a significant focus of saints included in the *Legenda aurea* are to be found among the early Christian Desert Fathers, anchorites and martyrs, the inclusion of the life of Saint Peter of Verona is significantly relevant to Voragine as he had been a contemporary and friend of the author.¹⁴ The initial stages of the thirteenth century witnessed an upsurge in Christianity with the effects of the Gregorian reform causing political, social, and religious expansion. No longer were the laity perceived as second-class citizens, but becoming active participants exploiting the lucrative pilgrimage routes by setting up as merchants, for example the *Via Francigena* from Canterbury to Rome. They provided much needed services

¹³ Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, p. 658.

¹⁴ Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time*, p. 7.

for the pilgrims such as food and shelter, as well as religious succour in the form of trinkets. However, the latter half of the century saw upheaval and unrest, those classed as heretics were not so much the concept we have today as perhaps blasphemers or those who carry out sacrilegious actions, but those whose ideals differed from the status quo both geographically, politically, and in concepts of faith.¹⁵

It was a heretical act that saw the assassination of Peter of Verona on his way from Como to Milan. Michael E. Goodich tells us that the author Thomas Agni of Lentino wrote the life of Saint Peter of Verona, and suggests that it is based on the saint's canonisation trials.¹⁶ These trials could entail interviewing a significant amount of people, for example in southern France, the Languedoc region would hear depositions from more than three hundred people of varying backgrounds and relationship with the candidate. Such unrest appears to call for the emergence of the *Legenda aurea* as the need for such a text could perhaps unify disparate communities in Christian continental Europe.

Heretical movements during this period championed piety, charity, and poverty as spiritual identities of sainthood rather than the traditional definitions of martyrdom or worker of miracles. Therefore, a good person could be, in lay terms, classed as a saint. Perhaps this opposing view was taken as a direct challenge to Rome, which condemned such heretical claims, or feared them as a threat to their control, or this lay definition could be viewed as a genuine striving for evidence of spiritual grace. Such heresy was most significant in northern Italy and southern France where the 'Brethren of the Free Spirit', the Waldensians, demonstrated such tendencies; in rural areas of France and Spain the Albigensian movement expressed desire to be distant from the Pope.¹⁷

Voragine invariably begins a saint's life with an etymology of his or her name and completes the biography with a transformation of relics, which were evidently important in the continuation of miracles after a saint's death, the transformation of relics across Europe

¹⁵ Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time*, p. 7.

¹⁶ Michael E. Goodich, *Lives and Miracles of the Saint: Studies in Medieval Latin Hagiography*, Variorum Collected Studies Series CS798, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 303.

¹⁷ Donald Weinstein, and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society: Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000–1700* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 166–193. See also, Lutz Kaelbur, 'Other and Inner Worldly Ascetism in Medieval Waldensianism: A Weberian Analysis', *Sociology of Religion*, 56. 2 (1995): 91–119.

engendered a broader public knowledge.¹⁸ The inclusion of relic transformation could probably explain the inclusion of Thomas of Canterbury whose cult was spread by English queens moving to European lands, such as Eleanor Plantagenet who moved to Castile in an attempt to expiate her father's sin of allegedly ordering the death of Thomas.¹⁹ However, veneration of English saints in Europe was not confined solely to Thomas of Canterbury. Northumbria's seventh-century Saint Oswald's contribution to sainthood saw his relics, taken by Saint Willibrord to aid his evangelical mission, was venerated on the continent, in Switzerland, and most notably in the church in Hildesheim in Germany, which is dedicated to him, and also claims to hold what is said to be the skull of Oswald in an ornamental reliquary.²⁰

Evidence suggests that the *Legenda aurea* significantly influenced the spread of Christianity throughout Europe. It gained its foothold by combining the lives of saints and the liturgical calendar. It thereby offers adherence and credence to the faith of the laity as, aided by its vernacular style, endorsed its evangelical purpose by either confirming the already established beliefs of the common person as well as bringing back into the fold those who had gone astray. The personal beliefs of the local communities had previously developed a distant relationship from the mainstream Roman Church, both geographically and spiritually, preferring the more immediate devotion to local saint who had not so far been considered 'authentic' by Rome.²¹ Local cults of saints had previously been confirmed by local bishops and dignitaries rather than having seal of approval from Rome. However, despite the *Golden Legend*'s perhaps selective stance, regarding the choice of saints to include, it nevertheless became a relevant structure in the lives of the faithful by informing preaching, thus, influencing the laity. Moreover, its subsequent dissemination, translations, and redactions, proves to confirm the manuscript's popularity as a mainstay of religious devotion. Evidence for this phenomenon is in the over one thousand extant copies of the *Golden Legend* in Latin

¹⁸ Sarah Salih, ed., *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 1–23.

¹⁹ Paul Webster, 'Introduction, The Cult of St Thomas Beckett: An Historiographical Pilgrimage', in Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin, eds. *The Cult of St Thomas Beckett in the Plantagenet World, c.1170–c.1220*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), pp. 1–24.

²⁰ Max Adams, *The King of Northumbria: The Life and Times of Oswald of Northumbria* (London: Head of Zeus, 2014), p.226.

²¹ Duffy, 'Introduction', pp. xi–xx.

as well as more than five hundred in existence in a variety of European vernacular languages.²²

Hagiographical themes are a significant consideration in attempts to understand Voragine's purpose. From arguably over exaggerated tales to a sincere attempt to reflect the love of the Divine in the written word are the intriguing nature of the manuscript and its redactors. It is significant, therefore, to examine the various themes pertaining to European hagiography itself in order to inform the thematic approach of this thesis.

For example, the cult of a saint is readily studied as the petition of a local saint to Rome by the community in which they had lived, if successful, often resulted in a written account acknowledging their sanctity and authenticity. This in turn perpetuated and expanded the cult. According to Cynthia Hahn, the written life precedes the expansion of a saint's cult, which grows hand in hand with oral tradition and word of mouth building on eyewitness tales of miracles and good deeds.²³

Social, political, and cultural aspects of the period of time in which the saint lived could have some bearing on why a saint was included or omitted in hagiographic tradition. For example, the religious philosophy of monastic Orders from closed communities such as Benedictines, to Mendicant Orders such as Dominicans, whose purpose was to preach and connect with the poor in the community. In his study of Dominican hagiography, S. Sobecki highlights that the use of *exempla*, or moral stories used for embellishment was at once designed to please the patron, communicate with lay audience, and promote the Dominican Order itself, Voragine himself was a Dominican.²⁴

The purpose and intended audience of hagiographical literature, the lives of saints, can be evident not only in the chosen language but also in the style of language used, such as implied narrative and the use of exemplar, to connect to the audience and create a larger than life hagiography. T. J. Heffernan illustrates that the purpose of transmitting the lives of saints

²² Duffy, 'Introduction', pp. xi–xx.

²³ Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 1–11.

²⁴ S. Sobecki, 'Exemplary Intentions: Two Dominican Hagiographers in the Thirteenth Century and the Preaching Through Exemplar', *New Blackfriars*, 89. 1022 (2008): 478–487.

is to encourage the laity to want to admire the character thereby creating a unified community in sacred aspiration.²⁵ Ralph Hanna posits that manuscript, as opposed to print, is unique in its ‘local sitedness’ that is pertaining to a specific local audience, claiming that such works are not engendered by previous narratives. However, perhaps that transmission, or copying, of manuscripts can indeed engender stylistic elements pertaining to the particular scribe or the local cultural needs. Moreover, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw book history move from court centred, limited readership to becoming more widely available.²⁶

In the early part of the thirteenth century, a resurgence of evangelical mission became evident in the Mendicant tradition, which was centred mainly in towns rather than rural locations. Helen Hills points to the inextricable relationship between city and saint that fostered a unique identity between the two.²⁷ It was during this time that Pope Innocent III (1161–1216) formalised the authenticity of cults of saints. Previously they had sprung from local oral tradition and testimony attested by lay people and town public figures, and were, therefore, out of the control of Rome. In order to rein in such heresy, thereby taking control, the Pope introduced trials for canonisation. These called witnesses to testify and give evidence of sanctity for the, usually deceased, candidate for sainthood.²⁸ However, this was not universally the case on rare occasions, as in the account of Saint Francis of Assisi who was actively proclaimed to be a saint before his death, certain people might be proclaimed a saint whilst still alive due to testimony of miracles as well as piety and poverty.²⁹ This official authentication of sanctity from Rome, based on witness testimony, therefore, provides the legitimacy on which Voragine based his 153 saints in the *Legenda aurea*.

However, Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell point out that those saints who became popular due to the enthusiasm of the local community represented a considerable

²⁵ T.J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 3–38.

²⁶ Ralph Hanna, ‘Middle English Books and Middle English Literary History’, *Modern Philology*, 102 (2004): 157–178.

²⁷ Helen Hills, ‘Dislocating Holiness: City, Saint and the Production of Flesh’, *Open Arts Journal*, 6. (2018): 39–65.

²⁸ Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart*, pp. 1–11.

²⁹ André Vauchez, ‘Jacques de Voragine et les saints du XIII^e siècle dans la *Légende dorée*’, in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires. (11–12 mai 1983)* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 27–57.

contrast to the one in ten who actually achieved canonisation.³⁰ The Dominican Order saw its missionary work as a call to take Christianity and the Church to the people via preaching and acts of charity. However, Ian Wood distinguishes Christianisation from mission claiming that during the early medieval era, evidence of missionary quest is to be found in the numerous lives of saints of the period, predominantly in the eighth and ninth centuries. Yet, Wood indicates that the correlation between these hagiographical accounts and their subsequent dissemination may have resulted in an over authorisation of a text or an undermining of its founding principal brought on by redaction and philological changes in style.³¹

Whilst previous written accounts of saints' lives had been available to clergy and perhaps the more affluent members of society, those of aristocracy or higher clergy, they were written in Latin which was not readily accessible to those who were not capable of reading it. The new abbreviated legends were to become practical tools of preaching which were at once communicative and relevant to the common people. As precursors to the *Legenda aurea*, indeed providing it with fundamental sources, two significant legends were produced by the Dominican Order, those of Bartholomew of Trent and Jean de Mailly. Le Goff claims that major spiritual influences in the life of Voragine, born out in his text, were Saint Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome who in their lives, teachings, and philosophy, epitomised the Christian ideal.³²

Translations and Redactions

As the popularity of the *Legenda aurea* became apparent throughout Europe, its adoption across the land inevitably introduced not only linguistic translations but also, arguably, liberties were taken with its content to appeal and perhaps be more relevant to its new audiences in various locals. As examples the codex was translated into French by Jean de Vignay (1333–1340), and later, having reached the shores of Britain, the first English printed translation was produced by William Caxton in 1439. Therefore, having been 'drawen out of Frensshe into Englisshe', the *Legenda aurea* became relevant to the English readership as well as throughout Europe.³³ Pierce Butler compared Caxton's fifteenth-century print

³⁰ Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 1661–93.

³¹ Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe 400–1050*, (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), p. 247.

³² Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time*, pp. 10–12.

³³ Richard Hamer, & Vida Russell, eds., *Gilte Legend*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006–7), p. 9.

translation to earlier English prose versions in manuscript form. However, since Butler's research was carried out in 1899 its subject matter is ripe for further investigation in this thesis.³⁴ As mentioned earlier, the majority of saints included in the manuscript are Early Desert Fathers, however, there is also a significant inclusion of saints from continental Europe, in particular Italy. Nevertheless, the central premise is that of the life of Christ, evident in the liturgical feast days which form the backbone of the text. This inherent foundation can be identified as an emphasis for the codex to be viewed as a liturgical guide, Christ being the centrality of the Church, and therefore Christian living, rather than a distinctive biographical collection of saints. Yet, the MS 72 in Lambeth Palace Library, a fifteenth-century Middle English translation, contains a number of English saints, including Saint Aldhelm (639–709). This manuscript and two other Middle English translations of the *Golden Legend*, including Caxton's printed version, will be explored in this thesis.

After its emergence in the thirteenth century, the style and the content of the *Legenda aurea* was adopted in various forms, as it was translated across Europe.³⁵ Inevitable adaptations took place which could be argued as either due to cultural necessity, with regard to translation, in particular from Voragine's Latin Vulgate form to other European vernacular forms such as Catalan and Langue d'Oc, or by other specific design.³⁶ This can perhaps be viewed as an attempt to produce a version of the *Legenda aurea* which would be more relevant to regional needs.

One way such developments occurred was in including local saints who were not present in the original manuscript. This could be viewed as an homage to the original text by emulating it in a uniquely local form, yet, from a more nuanced perspective, a design of the *Legenda Aurea* which was intended to be more relevant to the immediate audience regarding

³⁴ Pierce Butler, *Legenda Aurea, Légende Dorée, Golden Legend: A Study of Caxton's Golden Legend with Special Reference to its Relations to the Earlier Prose Traditions* (Baltimore, MD: Murphy, 1899).

³⁵For brief catalogue descriptions, see Brenda Fleith, 'Le classement des quelque 1000 manuscrits de la *Legenda aurea* latine en vue de l'établissement d'une histoire de la tradition', in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires, (11–12 mai 1983)* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 19–24.

³⁶ Marcos Ángel Cortés Guadarrama, 'Fuera del canón de la *Legenda aurea*: la vida de san Antolín en los Flores sanctorum castellano medievales', *Archivum* (Oviedo) 66.66 (2016): 7–44. See also, Marinela Garcia Sempere, 'On Manuscripts of the *Legenda Aurea* in Catalan', *Medievalia* (Barcelona, Spain) 18.2 (2015): 155–175.

veneration of local saints. The initial dissemination of translations of the codex was in the immediate vicinities of neighbouring provinces surrounding Genoa.³⁷ Such vernacular versions lent themselves to the spread of Dominican monastic locations across western Europe which reflected their mendicant philosophy of evangelisation.

Numerous studies have been conducted regarding the hagiographical content and style of narration of European translations of the *Legenda aurea*, indicating additions and alterations which occurred during its transmission.³⁸ These studies have included such as references to animals and their symbolism, and the specific iconography pertaining to the coronation of the Virgin.³⁹

The dissemination of the *Legenda aurea* across Europe saw significant influence in Spain, France, Germany, what is now the Czech Republic and England, as well as spreading to the Scandinavian reaches of the Continent. At the time the original was written in the thirteenth century, Europe was divided into regions and principalities which defended their territories both physically, with city walls and armies, as well as maintaining their unique identity within their culture which was reflected in their vernacular languages. For example, Langue d'Oc, the Occitan provincial language pertaining primarily to southern France but also spoken in various forms in south eastern Spain, Catalonia, and in provincial parts of northern Italy. However, as was often the case, invasions into, or by, neighbouring lands occurred in an attempt to gain land and power which could either spread or diminish linguistic identity. G. Brunel considers the lives of Franciscan saints in the translations of the

³⁷ Stephen A. Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Voragine: A Genoese Mind in Medieval Europe*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), pp. 66–164.

³⁸ For a consideration of the choices of saints made by Voragine for his *Legenda aurea*, specifically Saints Peter the Martyr, Dominic, Francis of Assisi and Elizabeth of Hungary, see A. Vauchez, 'Jacques de Voragine et les saints du XIII^e siècle dans la *Légende dorée*', in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires (11–12 mai 1983)* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 27–57.

With regard to variations in structural narrative, see also A. Boureau, 'Les structures narratives de la *Legenda aurea*: de la variation au grand chant sacré', in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires, (11–12 mai 1983)* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 57–77.

³⁹ L. Guilbert, 'L'Animal dans la Légende dorée'; Also, P. Verdier, 'Les Textes de Jacques de Voragine et l'iconographie du couronnement de la Vierge', in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires, (11–12 mai 1983)* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 77–95.

Legenda aurea into both Catalan and southern French Langue d'Oc indicating the intrinsic value of the inclusion of regional mendicant saints, such as Saint Francis himself, in promoting the evangelical purpose of the *Legenda aurea* as well as considering linguistic nuances within the texts pertaining to regional considerations.⁴⁰

In the case of French branches of the *Legenda aurea*, V. Russell considers Jean de Vignay's translation from the original Latin Vulgate into French with specific reference to Saint Bartholomew, George, Nicholas, as well as the feast of All Saints. Russell investigates some thirty-three manuscripts in order to identify a stemma evident in the translations. During the investigation Russell identifies that, whilst some translations have remarkable degree of accuracy in the French with relation to the original Latin, certain inaccuracies in translation occurred, for example in the case of Saint Nicholas where folio order appears to be confused. Moreover, the apparent inclusion of part of the life of Saint Andrew adds to the frustration in identifying a stemma. The result of this study identifies possible stemmata for each of the saints and the feast day mentioned above. However, Russell suggests that an in-depth analysis of the codicology of the manuscripts of the *Légende Dorée* in its various French translations is required to be undertaken in future to identify idiosyncrasies and similarities in codices in pursuit of stemmatic evidence.⁴¹

In a study by H. Maddocks regarding illumination in French translations, it is stated that most manuscript copies of the *Legenda aurea* into French begin with an illuminated frontispiece.⁴² Such codices were produced pre-1440, whereas the original French translation by de Vignay was in 1334. Maddocks points out that the iconography in de Vignay's translations

⁴⁰ G. Brunel, 'Les Saints franciscains dans les versions en langue d'oc et en catalan de la *Legenda aurea*', in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international sur la Legenda aurea: Texte latin et branches vernaculaires (11–12 mai 1983)* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 103–115.

⁴¹ V. Russell, 'Evidence for the De Vignay MSS: St Nicholas, St George, St Bartholomew, and All Saints', in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires. (11–12 mai 1983)* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 131–154.

See also: Dunn-Lardeau, 'La Contribution de J. Batallier a la traduction française de Jean de Vignay de la *Legenda aurea*', in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires. (11–12 mai 1983)*, (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 183–196.

⁴² H. Maddocks, 'Illumination in Jean de Vignay's *Légende dorée*', in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires (11–12 mai 1983)* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 155–169.

often depict images or motifs which do not correlate with Voragine's text. The author indicates that the images are clearly taken from existing breviaries, or icon images, representing commonly held symbols of the saint rather than a direct reflection of Voragine's narrative. Maddocks also indicates that thirteenth-century images relating directly to the *Legenda aurea* can be seen, not contained in folio form, but can be viewed in the sacred frescoes in Italy. For example, in the upper church of Saint Francis in Assisi by Cimabue, as well as those by Giotto in Padua.

Maddocks also offers that the fifteenth-century French Book of Hours by the Limbourg brothers, *Les Belles Heures*, not only contains images which relate directly to the content within the *Legenda aurea* but also contain lines of Voragine's narrative text as captions to accompany each image.⁴³ As an example, a fourteenth-century French translation was commissioned by Jeanne de Bourgogne, queen of Philippe VI de Valois, to be undertaken by Jean de Vignay. However, during the fifteenth century, subsequent translations underwent so many adaptations that numerous feast days and saints were added, as well as the altering of chapter sequences.

In the case of the German and Dutch translations of the *Legenda aurea*, Williams-Krapp suggests that these translations far superseded the number of people that were translated into other vernacular languages.⁴⁴ Williams-Krapp argues that the philological style and structure of the codex lends itself readily to subsequent legendaries in the Netherland region at the time, claiming that Voragine's Latin Vulgate version was already commonly known in Germany before his death. Moreover, the vernacular narrative influenced the production of homilies in the region with regard to style and content.

Williams-Krapp points out that the *Verspassional* and the *Marterbuch* were the two main Legendaries in German during the early fourteenth century, and indicates that both were written in verse. This verse form was considered as *Sermo Humilis*, designed to be written for

⁴³ H. Maddocks, 'Illumination in Jean de Vignay's Légende dorée', pp.155–169.

⁴⁴ Williams-Krapp, 'German and Dutch Translations of Legenda aurea', pp. 227–232. See also S. Jefferis, 'The Saint Catherine Legend of the Legenda Aurea, Traced through its German Translations and other German Versions in Prose, Verse, and as a Play', in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion. Actes du colloque international sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires (11–12 mai 1983)* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986), pp. 253–65.

ordinary people to understand, in the vernacular form, echoing the premise of the *Legenda aurea*. However, this is where the comparison differs. The *Verspassional* differed in structure from Voragine's text in that it was separated into three volumes: The Feast of Our Lady, Lives of the Apostles, and seventy-five saints in the Liturgical Year. Each volume was to be used separately rather than a complete trilogy, as opposed to the *Legenda aurea* being specifically designed to be a complete year-long volume. However, Voragine's original structure was the one to prevail.

Moreover, Williams-Krapp highlights that these German legendaries rapidly lost their popularity during the second half of the fourteenth century as such sacred texts written in verse became somewhat dismissed in favour of prose versions, claiming fashion to be the reason. Whilst Williams-Krapp states that the *Legenda aurea* was translated into prose, he fails to mention that it was indeed originally written in prose form. Therefore, one could argue that the *Legenda aurea* could be viewed as being ahead of its time in both its linguistic style, in that it steered away from the metrical structure of verse, and its single volume mendicant device, thereby being rather dissimilar to that of the afore-mentioned German texts. This proves to be relevant to the fifteenth-century Middle English MS 72 and its single text prose form to be studied later.

In the case of *Der Heiligen Leben* the prose legendary written at the beginning of the fifteenth century in Nuremberg based on the *Legenda aurea*, the Dominican friar who produced it included in excess of one hundred lives of saints pertaining to central Europe, primarily south Germany. According to Marianne E. Kalinke, this codex contains a *passio* of the seventh-century English saint and martyr, Saint Oswald, translated from Bede's account.⁴⁵ Furthermore, this vernacular codex became vastly popular which is evident in its early sixteenth-century printed version producing one thousand copies and its low German tongue seeing copies spreading north as far as Iceland.

⁴⁵ Marianne E. Kalinke, *St Oswald of Northumbria: Continental Metamorphoses*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 297 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies: 2005), p. 31. See also, Annemiek Jansen, 'The Development of the St Oswald Legends on the Continent', in Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge, eds., *Oswald Northumbria King to European Saint*, Paul Watkins Medieval Studies, 14, (Lincolnshire: Paul Watkins, 1996), pp. 230–240.

As mentioned previously, a significant philological aspect of the *Legenda aurea* is Voragine's inclusion of the etymology of a saint's name, giving its spiritual meaning, at the beginning of the account of their life. Williams-Krapp, suggests that translations of the *Legenda aurea* into the widespread range of German vernacular spoken across the Netherlands tended to omit such elements, arguing that any translation would have been confusing and unnecessary.⁴⁶ However, Le Goff argues that, whilst dismissed as whimsical by some in later centuries, the etymologies provided by Voragine serve to revere and prove sanctity regarding the saint.⁴⁷ Therefore, far from such definitions being dismissed as too much work to translate to bother, on the contrary they can be viewed as an essential spiritual element of the composition of the life of a saint.

The Alsatian *Legenda aurea* and the southern Netherlandish *Legenda aurea*, commonly held as the earliest translations of the *Legenda aurea* in the Germanic regions, strongly adhere to the lives held within Voragine's text, as opposed to adding local cults, this challenges the latter being a commonly held belief regarding translations throughout Europe. Williams-Krapp also states that this is true of the primary Dutch translation, thought to have been completed by a Carthusian in Belgium 1358.

Subsequent translations did indeed become victims of their own fate, in that the seemingly inevitable local influence of regional religious cults, and places of pilgrimage, fed by relics and miracles, saw local saints being included in regional translations, perhaps as a further attempt for the *Legenda aurea* to become locally relevant. As part of its mendicant purpose was to help create a common Christian community, thereby including local saints would give the audience a sense of belonging. Feasibly, political purposes may also have come into play; promotion of local cults bring pilgrims, which, by definition, bring commerce. Williams-Krapp claims that ultimately in the case of the southern Netherlandish *Legenda aurea* most of its subsequent translations and developments have caused them to be unrecognisable as such, due to the influx of local saints into the main content of the original text.

⁴⁶ Williams-Krapp, 'German and Dutch Translations of the *Legenda aurea*', pp. 227–232.

⁴⁷ Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time*, p. 12.

With reference to the Castilian *Gran flos sanctorum*, written in the second half of the thirteenth century, Beresford indicates that, whilst being widely considered as a re-writing of Voragine's the *Legenda aurea*, recent research has shown that additional subject matter, taken predominantly from the *Acta Sanctorum*, has been included.⁴⁸ Beresford adds that the *Gran flos sanctorum* echoes the *Legenda aurea* in its sequence both with regard to the liturgical calendar, beginning with advent, and its readings in the sanctoral relating to each saint's feast day. These do however extend beyond the 153 feast days in Voragine's original work to in excess of two hundred in the *Gran flos sanctorum*. Beresford indicates that this text is extant in five codices yet lacks consistency of lives of saints across them.⁴⁹ Ultimately, Beresford describes the compilation of the *Gran flos sanctorum* in geological terms in that its layered image regarding style and content highlights the changing concept of sanctity during the early and late medieval period.

Conclusion

In conclusion, from its inception in Genoa in the thirteenth century the *Legenda aurea* became widely popular across late medieval Europe. Originally created as an evangelical device by the Dominican Bishop Voragine, its rich hagiographical content and ecclesiastical calendar intrinsically linked the *sanctoral* and the *temporal*. Such a combination can be seen as providing the reader and listener with at once spiritual solace but also chronological structure via the Church's year. The original Latin Vulgate codex became adopted into many linguistic guises as it was disseminated and translated throughout the regions of late medieval Europe. The regional adoption of the *Legenda aurea* saw local influences in the form of cults of local saints being added to the text, hence the manuscript developed a personal relevance to the local community. A similar tendency, regarding incorporation of local saints into the text, occurred as the *Legenda aurea* reached the shores of England. Yet, the island of Britain had already established regional hagiographical tradition offering a wealth of sainthood to be exploited, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

⁴⁸ Beresford, 'Dreams of Death in Medieval Castilian Hagiography: Martyrdom and Ideology in the *Gran Flos Sanctorum*', *La corónica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures and Cultures*, 42.1 (2013), pp. 159–184.

⁴⁹ Beresford, 'Dreams of Death', 159–184.

Chapter Three

Hagiographical Tradition in England and the *Golden Legend*

Introduction

Lives of saints had been written in Britain since the early Anglo-Saxon period, following Christianity's first arrival on its shores. Bede's the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* [The Ecclesiastical History of the English People] (731 AD) saw the first collection of lives of saints incorporated into a chronicle. However, the vast majority of subsequent medieval hagiographical writing in Britain can be found in later centuries such as the *South English Legendary* (1270–1280) (henceforth *SEL*), and *Mirk's Festial* (1380), both of which are collections of saints' lives written in vernacular form and popular in their copies and distribution, in particular the *SEL*. The context of these codices in relation to the *Legenda aurea* will be addressed further in this chapter. These texts reflect a common European trend in the thirteenth century of written accounts of lives of saints, being produced for the people which is most strongly evident in Voragine's the *Legenda aurea*. The Dominican monastic movement, to which Voragine belonged, was significant in driving their mendicant philosophy forward, which is physically evident in the production and dissemination of the *Legenda aurea*. The Middle English legends are seen as abbreviated versions of lives of saints held within monastic centres. The saints who were chosen to be included in the new collections drew on local devotion.¹

Via word of mouth from pilgrim to laity and public translations of relics the feast days of saints became widespread and a common occurrence from the seventh century.² The original *vitae* and *passiones*, lives of saints and lives of martyrs, were written in Latin and as such the language was considered a language of the sacred.³ However, as the expansion of

¹ E. Gordon Whatley, Anne B. Thompson and Robert K. Upchurch, eds., *Saints' Lives in Middle English Collections*, Middle English Text Series 68 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute publications, 2004), p. 11.

² Whatley, Thompson and Upchurch, eds., *Saints' Lives in Middle English Collections*, p. 2.

³ For distinction between *vita* and *passio* see Charles F. Altman, "Two Types of Opposition and the Structure of Latin Saints' Lives." *Medievalia et humanistica* 6 (1975): 1–11.

cults of saints extended throughout Europe over the coming centuries local vernacular translations and compositions of lives of saints began to emerge. As discussed in the previous chapter, notable examples were the translations and redactions of Voragine's thirteenth-century the *Legenda aurea* in such texts as the *Gran flos sanctorum* written later that century in medieval Castile, and *Der Heiligen Leben* in early fifteenth-century Germany.

In England, translations of Latin hagiographical texts are most notably those in Middle English, although some were written in Old English, such as the ninth century *Old English Martyrology*. Middle English versions are generally abbreviated and abridged versions of their Latin models. For example, the Middle English *vitae* of Saint Benedict and Scholastica, his sister, are taken from Pope Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*, written in Latin in the sixth century.⁴ The result of the effect of the Norman Conquest in 1066 gave rise to a unique and unifying nation of English written language which had previously eluded sacred texts in the disparate English kingdoms. Up until the sixteenth century, lives of saints played an integral part in evangelising and establishing Christian values and customs in England as well as on the continent. As a considerable supplement to the Bible, lives of saints extended the message in written form portrayed by a saint's life, who, by definition, reflect divine teaching in their own devotion to God.

This chapter will consider the emergence and development of hagiographical texts in the English tradition, from early Britain in Bede's contribution in the Anglo-Saxon era, to the tenth century monastic reform and the influence of the re-emergence of Benedictine monasticism, to the momentous influence that the Norman invasion caused after its eleventh-century conquest of the English people, both upon the language itself, with the nascence of Middle English writing, and its effect on the production of *vitae*. This will form a backdrop for exploration of translations of Voragine's the *Legenda aurea* into Middle English, and its use as a model by English appropriation. It will further explore legends in the English tradition in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

Hagiographical Tradition in England

There are a considerable number of hagiographical texts remaining from the Anglo-Saxon English tradition in both English prose and verse, as well as verse texts in Norman

⁴ Whatley, Thompson and Upchurch, eds., *Saints' Lives in Middle English Collections*, p. 3.

French from Anglo-Norman period. These reflect both the pre- and post-Norman invasion literary trends in hagiography. However, in the second half of the thirteenth century literary linguistic diversity spread in England. It was during this period that Latin and French devotional manuscripts were translated into a number of Middle English dialects. Among numerous reasons for such a change was the weakening influence of France, in particular Normandy, amid the ruling elite. This shift resulted in English being used as the spoken language amongst nobility, plus the encouragement of the Church to have hagiography translated into Middle English, as a move towards inclusivity in readership and use among the laity.⁵

Early English Lives of Saints

In Britain in the eighth-century Bede (673–735) was considered ‘[...] in his own lifetime to be the most eminent scholar in the west’, being a prolific writer of theological and scientific works, among others.⁶ His most famous work containing numerous *vitae* and *passiones* is the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* [The Ecclesiastical History of the English People]. The remarkable consideration regarding his written work is that during his relatively short life he remained most of his days in Northumbria in the north of Britain. From his initial acceptance into the monastery in Wearmouth at the age of seven, by Benedict Biscop the Abbot, to his subsequent move to the monastery in Jarrow he spent his time in religious contemplation, teaching and writing.⁷

George Hardin Brown posits that it is unknown which models Bede used to inform his allegorical Latin style, yet surmises that the considerable library that Bede had access to in his monastery, stocked by such as Benedict Biscop from his travels on pilgrimage to Rome, would have lent great influence both in style and content in the scriptorium.⁸ When referring

⁵ Whatley, Thompson and Upchurch, eds., *Saints’ Lives in Middle English Collections*, p. 10.

⁶ C.E. Whiting, ‘The Life of the Venerable Bede’, in *Bede His Life, Times and Writings: Essays in Commemoration of the Twelfth Centenary of His Death*, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. xiv.

⁷ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Leo Shirley-Price, revised by R.E. Latham, (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 20.

⁸ George Hardin Brown, *A Companion to Bede*, Anglo-Saxon Studies, 12 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 9–10.

to Bede, Brown firmly asserts that in the eighth century he stood as an incomparably prominent literary figure, despite his remote location in Northumbria.

In the year 597 monasticism reached the shores of Britain via Pope Gregory the Great, with Augustine founding the first monastery at Canterbury. In its infancy on the island of Britain monastic observances differed to a certain degree from each other.⁹ However, the singular instruction which ultimately dominated was that of the Benedictine Order which followed the *Rule of Benedict*, originally founded in Monte Cassino in Italy in the early sixth century by Benedict of Nursia. The *Rule* advocated self-denial, abstinence, religious contemplation, and physical work. Such was the influence of Christian Rome on Britain that Benedictine monasteries appeared in in the far regions of the north, significantly in Wearmouth and Jarrow, where Bede saw out his monastic life, thus, facilitating the production of hagiographical texts.

In Britain cults of saints had developed since Pope Gregory ‘[...] was inspired by God to send his servant Augustine [...] to preach the word of God to the English nation’.¹⁰ The highly significant source that informs us of this is Bede’s eighth-century the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* [The Ecclesiastical History of the English People]. Bede’s text was not a liturgical construct, an aid to the feast days of the Saint and the key events in the Christian year as Voragine’s the *Legenda aurea* would later be. As an example, the date of the liturgical feast of Easter was at that time being hotly debated and noted quite adamantly by Bede in his text. His work is seen both as a chronicle, a history set out in roughly chronological order, yet it is also a hagiographical text containing accounts of lives of saints, the majority of whom are British.

Bede’s text contains in excess of eleven saints, demonstrating knowledge of such local Northumbrian saints as Aidan, Cuthbert and Oswald, but also of saints from continental Europe such as Gregory the Great, and Augustine. However, whilst later lives of saints were to see Gregory and Augustine occur regularly in legendaries, Oswald appears once more in tenth-century Aelfric’s the *Lives of saints*, and Aidan is not written about again. Surprisingly, it seems, Bede also relates a brief account of a southern English seventh-century saint, Saint Aldhelm, who became Abbot of Malmesbury and Bishop of Sherborne. Orchard points to a

⁹ Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks, 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1–15.

¹⁰ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, p. 72.

possible relevance Aldhelm would have to Bede in that Aldhelm was present and supported the baptism of King Aldfrith of Northumbria (685–705), and that Aldhelm himself had royal connections in the North.¹¹ Aldhelm subsequently appears, perhaps expectedly, in the late thirteenth-century *South English Legendary*.¹²

Christine Rauer demonstrates that a manuscript collection of saints' lives, *The Old English Martyrology* emerged which contains some 200 prose lives of both continental and English saints.¹³ Rauer suggests it may have been composed between the ninth and tenth centuries. The text is a combination of feast days, seasons and calendar sequence, as well as history and cosmology. Therefore, it may be seen as a chronicle rather than a pure legendary. Rauer posits that it was compiled from Latin sources, creating a steppingstone from Aldhelm and Bede, both prolific writers of the seventh and early eighth centuries, to the pre-Conquest era. Furthermore, the author indicates that *The Old English Martyrology* may also bear witness to King Alfred's nationwide educational programme as it does not adhere to local cults. As to the manuscript's author and the reasons for inclusion or omission of saints' lives, Rauer offers that there is little but conjecture and speculation regarding this matter.

The relationship between gender and place may hold a clue to the purpose of the text. Jacqueline Stodnick describes *The Old English Martyrology* as a form of 'universal discourse' both through the textual narrative and the presence of cults of saints, who in physical practice identify with land and community, demonstrating a clear connection between the male saint and the land.¹⁴ However, Stodnick points out that this is not the case for female saints, evident in the lack of miracles relating to place in the female lives of saints

¹¹ Andy Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1–4.

¹² Virginia Blanton, 'Counting Noses and Assessing the Numbers: Native Saints in the South English Legendaries', in Heather Blurton and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds., *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 233–250.

¹³ Christine Rauer, ed. and trans., *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation, and Commentary*, Anglo-Saxon Texts, 10 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2016), pp. 1–30. See also, Christine Rauer, 'Female Hagiography in the Old English Martyrology', in Paul E. Szarmach, ed. *Writing Women Saints in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 13–29.

¹⁴ Jacqueline Stodnick, 'Bodies of Land: The Place of Gender in the Old English Martyrology', in Paul E. Szarmach, ed., *Writing Women Saints in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 30–52. See also, Christine Rauer, ed. and trans., *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation, and Commentary*, Anglo-Saxon Texts, 10 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2016).

Catherine Cubitt contests that between Bede and the Norman Conquest there was a paucity of hagiographical writing due to monastic decline. The lack of fully functional monasteries resulted in fewer texts being written.¹⁵ This view is supported by Kirsten Fenton.¹⁶ Monastic rule had become lax, seeing such previously unthinkable practices as marriage becoming the accepted norm within a monastic context.

However, the tenth century was witness to a Benedictine monastic reform, an attempt to address this malaise, thus, resulting in a re-emergence of the writing of hagiographical manuscripts. Though, whilst monasticism began to develop during the tenth and eleventh centuries in the south of England in such areas as Westminster, Bury St Edmunds, Eynsham and Worcester, in the north monasticism had dwindled. Yet, there was to come a distinctive relationship between the Anglo-Saxon yearnings for the past, in the lives of their saint, with the arrival of Norman political dominance.¹⁷

A notable author of hagiography during the tenth century was Aelfric (955–1010) who wrote a collection of twenty-eight saints, five of whom are English, entitled the *Lives of Saints* (996–997). Mechthild Gretsch highlights that in Aelfric's preface he justifies his choice of saints to be distinct from his Homilies, as the Homilies were intended for the laity to honour with festivals.¹⁸ The lives were compiled according to Benedictine monastic devotional practice, described as 'lives of saints whom monks in their Offices honour amongst themselves.'¹⁹

¹⁵ Catherine Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of Early Anglo-Saxon Saints', in Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, eds., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 29–66.

¹⁶ Kirsten A. Fenton, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the Works of William of Malmesbury* ed. by Jacqueline Murray and Diane Watt, *Gender in the Middle Ages*, 12, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), pp. 9–12.

¹⁷ Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300*, p. 18.

¹⁸ Mechthild Gretsch, *Aelfric and the Cult of Saints in late Anglo-Saxon England*, *Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England*, 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.1–32.

¹⁹ Walter W. Skeat, *Aelfric's Lives of Saints: Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days Formerly Observed by the English Church*, I, *edited from British Museum Cott. MS. Julius E. VII with Variants from other Manuscripts*, 2 vols, EETS 76, 82 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 3–5.

Aelfric, who wrote in both Latin and Old English, earlier states most markedly in the same preface to the *Lives of Saints* his reticence in translating accounts of lives of saints from Latin to the vernacular common tongue, suggesting it could be bordering on blasphemy:

Nec tamen plura promitto me scripturum hac lingua,
quia nec convenit huic sermocinationi plura inseri,
ne forte despectui habeantur margarite Christi [...]
Non mihi inputetur quod diuinam scripturam nostrae lingue inferno.

[I do not promise, however, to write very many in this tongue,
because it is not fitting that many should be translated into our language,
lest peradventure the pearls of Christ be had in disrespect [...]
Let it not be considered as a fault in me that I turn sacred narrative into our own
tongue.]²⁰

Janet Burton claims that Aelfric is significant as his work was designed to be used as an educational device not only within the confines of the monastery but for the community beyond. Aelfric's collection of lives in Catholic Homilies was intended for a twofold audience, both for clergy as a preaching aid for sermons during Mass, and for the laity. It was written in vernacular English, thereby creating what Burton describes as an accessible educational tool for Christian exemplar. A further purpose of this and other such texts written at that time helped to foster and develop the cult of saints, and perhaps more significantly, the status of the monasteries.²¹

Nicholas Vincent indicates that post-Conquest there was an initial objection to the cult of the Anglo-Saxon saints. Indeed, many relics are suspected to have been disposed of, in particular by Abbot Warin of Malmesbury.²² However, by the end of the eleventh century relics were being translated to Norman shrines.²³ The Normans actively promoted the

²⁰ Skeat, *Aelfric's Lives of Saint*, pp. 3–5.

²¹ Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300*, p. 16.

²² Susan J. Ridyard, 'Condigna Veneratio: Post Conquest Attitudes to Saints of the Anglo-Saxons', *Anglo-Norman Studies. Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, 9 (1987): 179–206.

²³ Nicholas Vincent, 'The Pilgrimage of the Angevin Kings of England 1154–1272', in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 13. See also, Ridyard, 'Condigna Veneratio', pp. 179–206.

production of lives of saints and the translation of relics to what they considered to be more honourable locations, for example, the elaborate shrine of Saint Cuthbert in the Norman Cathedral at Durham. J. Catto points out that, under the later reign of Henry V (1413–1422), the promotion of the Anglo-Saxon saints was partially politically motivated, both with regard to Norman occupation and in cultivating a national identity.²⁴ Hugh Thomas highlights the key role of the promotion of English saints by the English monasteries as fundamental to maintaining English identity.²⁵

Norman influence on the impetus to produce hagiographical works containing lives of the Anglo-Saxon saints can be seen as the political power of promotion of English saints in cementing their claim to the land and its people as well as, perhaps, a sense of religious obligation. For example, the new life of Saint Edmund, King, was produced in Bury St Edmunds.²⁶ An upsurge in the promotion of local saints began in earnest which can be seen as an attempt by the Normans to appease the local communities and create a sense of unity.

The mutual religious affiliation and devotion shared by the Anglo-Saxons and Normans was to see a common aspiration for accounts of saints' lives to be produced. This unique combination will be further discussed within this chapter. This relationship was also to result in the emergence of Middle English as a unifying written language in subsequent hagiographical texts. Susan Ridyard considers that, as well as the flourishing of monastic writing in the immediate post-Conquest era, such practices may well have been driven by a fundamental need to preserve and maintain the traditions held within the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine communities.²⁷

In the principal Benedictine communities of, for example, Malmesbury, Worcester and, Canterbury, a considerable amount of writing took place in the century following 1066.²⁸ The most significant work is that of William of Malmesbury is his *De gesta pontificum anglorum* [The Deeds of the Bishops of England], which Kirsten Fenton indicates is devoted

²⁴ J. Catto, 'Religious Change Under Henry V', in *Henry V the Practice of Kingship*, ed. G. L. Harriss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 1071–08.

²⁵ Hugh M., Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity 1066–1220* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 20.

²⁶ Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300*, p. 194.

²⁷ Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval life and Thought, 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 171–173.

²⁸ Kirsten A. Fenton, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the Works of William of Malmesbury*, *Gender in the Middle Ages*, 12, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), p. 9.

to Saint Aldhelm (639–709), who had played a crucial role in maintaining the standards and practices befitting the Benedictine monastic tradition. Along with William of Malmesbury’s *De Gesta Regum Anglorum* [The Deeds of the Kings of England], the primary concern appears to have been the recording of English ecclesiastical history, as Bede had done previously, and whom he wished to emulate, which is evident in his prologue.²⁹ William is more closely identified with Malmesbury Abbey, located in Wiltshire, yet he was also commissioned to write for other Benedictine communities such as Glastonbury Abbey, which saw him produce writings on Saint Dunstan (909–988), Patrick (385–461), and Indract, of unknown date, who were venerated locally in Glastonbury. William of Malmesbury also translated Coleman’s Old English work on Saint Wulfstan to Latin commissioned by Prior Warin of Worcester sometime between 1124 and 1142.



Figure 1. Location of Medieval Malmesbury in Southern Britain in Close Proximity to Canterbury and the Pilgrimage Route to Rome. www.britannica.com

²⁹ R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomas and M. Winterbottom, eds. and trans., *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 9), p. 1.

Ridyard points out that William of Malmesbury gives priority to royal saints over others, which is particularly indicated in his preface to the life of Edward the Confessor. Here he acknowledges the King's ancestors, stating that the saints from common stock do not require recording.³⁰ Cults of royal saints in the Anglo-Saxon period were popular, perhaps imbuing the populace with a sense of justification of loyalty, as well as providing a figurehead to both venerate and aspire, or dream, to emulate. Ridyard posits that royal sanctity was an assumption to be expected, as ordained by God, being part of the *stirps regia* family line.

The Norman Conquest inevitably affected the veneration of the Anglo-Saxon royal saints. As an example, the feast of Saint Aethelwold and Saint Edmund at Abingdon were purportedly banned on the claim by the Normans that the English in general were uncouth.³¹ Writing in Old English continued in certain monastic communities which maintained English culture in the face of 'Norman newfangledness', as Michael Swanton cites British Library MS Cotton Domitian Aviii..³² This is despite the practice not having been employed in official documentation, both in royal and ecclesiastical matters since the 1070s.

While the Rule of Benedict may have been over-arching in both Britain and France with its strict adherence to self-restraint and solitary contemplation, local nuances would prevail in the form of language, dialect, and culture in the indigenous written word, thereby permeating Norman influence. It is tempting to posit that the coded letters on the outer rim of the Benedictine Medal, worn to this day by Benedictine monks and the faithful, may well have been employed as a guarding talisman to protect against the Norman usurpers, whilst undertaking the writing of lives of the Anglo-Saxon saints. They read:

VRS	<i>Vade retro Satana</i>	<i>Begone Satan</i>
NSMV	<i>numquam suade mihi vana</i>	<i>never suggest vain things to me</i>
SMQL	<i>Sunt mala quae libas</i>	<i>What you offer is evil</i>
IVB	<i>ipse venenum bibas</i>	<i>Drink your own poison.</i> ³³

³⁰ Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 171–173.

³¹ Knowles, D. *The Monastic Order in England 940–1216*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 12.

³² Michael Swanton, ed., trans., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, 2nd edn (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), pp. 13–27.

³³ Ampleforth Abbey Trustees, *Saint Benedict's Prayer Book* (Ampleforth: Ampleforth Abbey Press: 1993), p.1.

Ridyard emphasises that Ely held a strategic place in the Norman focus on the veneration of saints in the century following the Conquest.³⁴ The cult of Saint Etheldreda (636–679) was adopted and adapted to suit the changing political landscape. This usurping of the cult led to new hagiographical accounts incorporated into the biased history of the monastery. The writer of the *Liber Eliensis* [Book of Ely] reconstructed her *vita* to have a sense of continuity, effectively creating this seventh-century Abbess in a twelfth-century role. For example, it is stated that Etheldreda's foundation of the monastery at Ely is at the site of an original one founded by Saint Augustine, and that the island had been given to her by her husband. Ridyard suggests this is at odds with Bede's account as it is stated that Ely, in the province of the East Angles, is a region of six hundred families.³⁵

As in Ely, Bury saw the local cult of Saint Edmund (841–869) adopted and employed with strategic aims.³⁶ Baldwin commissioned a collection of miracles from archdeacon Hermann which emphasised continuity to the late eleventh-century. Hermann's account accentuates Edmund's sovereignty and the power of his miracles to foil enemies. Moreover, he is elevated to the status of patron saint for the region, enhancing his position among the local community. Therefore, the earlier *Passio Edmundi*, composed by Abbo of Fleury in the 980s, was reproduced with an anti-episcopal slant popular in Bury since the Conquest.

In the north of England, the cult of Saint Cuthbert at Durham was also under scrutiny by the Normans. Successive murders of appointed Norman overlords, such as Robert de Comines in 1069, fuelled the cause. B. Colgrave highlights Symeon's account in his writing of the local community in which it is claimed that as William the Conqueror sent forces to Northumbria to punish the rebels a thick fog descended halting their advances, offering evidence of Cuthbert's supernatural intervention.³⁷ Arguably, the dishonour of the exhumation of the body of Saint Cuthbert, to confirm or deny his sanctity via incorrupt state, secured the Norman stamp of authority on northern England. His body was later laid to rest in

³⁴ Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 171–173.

³⁵ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, IV, p. 19.

³⁶ Michael Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, Toronto Medieval Latin Texts, 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1972), p. 12.

³⁷ B. Colgrave, 'The Post-Bedan Miracles and Translations of St Cuthbert' in C. Fox and B. Dickens, eds., *The Early Cultures of Northwest Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), pp. 307–332. See also, W.E. Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North: The Region and its Transformation, 1000–1135* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 106–157.

great ceremony in an elaborate shrine within the newly constructed Norman cathedral, signifying Norman ownership of the saint and his community.

The Archbishop of Canterbury after the Norman Conquest was Stephen Lanfranc, instrumental in the promotion or demotion of the Anglo-Saxon saints. The initial absence of the feast of Saint Dunstan from the Constitutions demonstrates Lanfranc's uncertainty regarding the saint. However, he was later to fall into favour as, when Lanfranc became ill, he attributed his return to health to Saint Dunstan. Ridyard's approach to the influence of the Norman Conquest on the production of hagiography in England is to consider topoi and the bigger picture evident in the themes or formulae employed in order to promote or side-line certain elements of the Anglo-Saxon saints, creating a convincing rationale for sanctity.³⁸

Held in high esteem as Bishop of Winchester during the tenth century was Saint Aethelwold. Burton describes him as a leading Latinist who taught, among others, Wulfstan, later author of a Latin life of Aethelwold.³⁹ Both were key ecclesiastical figures driving the tenth-century monastic reform closely associated with Bishops Dunstan and Oswald, both of whom became saints who derived from an elevated ecclesiastical position. A further significant *vita* by Wulfstan was the verse account of the miracles in the life of Saint Swithun, the patron saint of the monastic house at Winchester.⁴⁰

Post-Conquest and Mendicant Influence

The somewhat inward-looking Benedictines following a Rule with stringent focus on self-restraint in monastic life began to reach out to the wider community, the laity, with a burgeoning philosophy which would later be encapsulated in the evangelical zeal of the Dominican and Franciscan Orders in the thirteenth century. It would be from the Dominican Order in Italy that the *Legenda aurea* would emerge and spread to Britain, to be later adopted and adapted by such as John Mirk, an Augustinian Canon from Shropshire, in the fourteenth century into vernacular English in *Mirk's Festial* in which he readily claims his major source

³⁸ Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 14–15.

³⁹ Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300*, p. 16.

⁴⁰ See also, R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London: Methuen, 1952), pp. 85–104.

for his collection of lives of saints as being that of the *Legenda aurea* with insular saints added. This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail later.

During the Anglo-Norman period Burton tells us that the copying of texts fulfilled two aims: to obey the rule of the monastic order to carry out manual work, and for the transmission of knowledge. Moreover, in this way the past was maintained and preserved. The eleventh century saw the development of the liturgy which encouraged the copying of liturgical treatise while simultaneously creating lives of saints for both private and public use.⁴¹ A twofold reason for the increase in written accounts of the lives of saints following the Norman invasion is suggested by Antonia Gransden, supported by Burton, that it was at once an emotional reaction to occupation, coupled by a more strategic approach to ensure the survival of scriptoria and monastic tradition in Britain. Moreover, it also served as an anchor to the diminishing the Anglo-Saxon era of British saints and their communities.⁴²

Subsequent to the Norman Conquest, a new identity began to emerge in Britain regarding monastic patronage. Immediately after the invasion patronage of religious houses, and therefore the production of hagiographical texts, came from Normandy. As the Normans settled they brought in Cluniacs, and Anglo-Norman identity began to materialise. From 1077 a number of monasteries were founded in Britain which were devoid of direct links to Normandy, yet, were influenced by the Cluny Abbey in Burgundy. The significance of the Cluniac philosophy was that each of its monastic houses was duty bound to the others under the head Burgundian abbot. That said, some houses, whilst adopting the Cluniac liturgy, maintained a certain degree of autonomy.⁴³

Such independent houses received royal patronage. For example, Burton further advises that in 1121 King Henry I founded a monastery in Reading served by monks from Burgundy. Also, in 1148 Faversham saw King Stephen's patronage. A possible political ploy to promote the popularity of monastic houses, while remaining shrewdly autonomous of Normandy. Nevertheless, a result of such activity, either directly or indirectly, was a flourishing of lives of saints. However, the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries saw a desire to return to the purest form of Christian life. For example, Benedict's Rule was reaffirmed with focus on the lives of the early desert fathers to reflect the strict ascetic

⁴¹ Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300*, p. 191.

⁴² Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), I, pp. 22–25.

⁴³ Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300*, p. 36.

philosophy within the monastic community confines of a coenobitic existence. New Orders promoting this philosophy were the Cistercian Order, established as the Orders of Tiron, Savigny and Cîteaux, and the Carthusians of Grande Chartreuse.⁴⁴ Geoffrey Galt Harpham informs that coenobitic idealism was first promoted by Pachomius in the fourth century, which Basil further supported.⁴⁵ Coenobitism was in contrast to contemporary eremitism, which saw such as Mary of Egypt and Paul of Thebes live isolated, unstructured, free roaming lives. As Harpham states ‘Coenobitic monasticism ... represented a more corporate and stable form of ascetism, an institutionalisation of the primary charisma of the eremite’.⁴⁶

The early thirteenth century saw a considerable shift in monastic philosophy. In juxtaposition to the cloistered Benedictine Rule, the mendicant wave that swept western Christendom actively promoted evangelisation. This mendicant pursuit involved travelling across communities to preach far and wide. The lives of these preachers reflected those of the *Vita Apostolica* [Lives of the Apostles] which allowed begging for subsistence, or relying on the good will of the people. The most influential of these Orders in Britain were the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, and Carmelites.

As the *Legenda aurea* was originally written by a Dominican bishop, it is therefore prudent to take an overview of the relevance of this Order in the island of Britain. According to William A. Hinnebusch, the Dominican Order began in 1220 in Bologna and soon spread to other Italian provinces.⁴⁷ Twelve friars were dispatched from Bologna in 1221 on missionary quest to England. These friars travelled under the auspices of the then bishop of Westminster, Peter des Roches; the lead friar being Gilbert de Fresney. After first establishing Houses in southern England, significantly the priory in Oxford, by the close of the century the Dominican Order had spread throughout Britain numbering in excess of 560 houses.

The Dominican Order’s emphasis on preaching demanded a high level of education. Therefore, learning played a significant role in a monk’s ministry. In their Oxford priory, a

⁴⁴ Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300*, p. 63.

⁴⁵ Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 21.

⁴⁶ Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative*, p. 21. See also Gavin D. Flood, *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 171.

⁴⁷ William A., Hinnebusch, *The Early English Friars Preachers* (Institutum historicum FF. praedicatorum Romae ad S. Sabinae: Dissertationes historicae, fase. XIV: Rome, 1951), pp. 102–103.

school was established for the study of theology soon after its founding. The Dominican philosophy allowed a friar to borrow a book from a library for life, afterwards it would not necessarily be returned to the priory from which it was borrowed, but to its geographical province where it was then re-issued to others. This practice is therefore an example of how the mendicant philosophy was not restricted to an individual library. The libraries of these religious houses would have contained and promoted saints' lives and the most significant of these lives would have been Saint Dominic (1170–1221), the Order's founder. Voragine's 1260 the *Legenda aurea* would have found a ready readership within these religious houses.

Purpose of Legendaries: Lives of Saints and Turbulent Times

However, lives of saints were not written in a vacuum. External influences inevitably affected their frequency of production and content. Conflict and political dominance, for example, Edward I's bloody attacks on the north, together with the devastating outbreaks of plague influenced their output. Yet, despite such odds, or even due to them, the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries in England saw monastic foundations re-emerge, expand and flourish which spawned the production and desire for religious texts including, most significantly, saints' lives demonstrating a link to the Anglo-Saxon past and promotion of local cults in written form.⁴⁸

England had been wracked with turmoil, not least of which had been the plague which ravaged the population, as it had done in continental Europe, to the extent of taking the lives of up to half of the European population between 1347 and 1349.⁴⁹ Lyrics of a later fifteenth-century Middle English hymn demonstrates the plight in Chetham Library, Manchester, MS. 6709:

O Hevenly sterre, most Comfortable of light,

Which, with thy goostely gracious Influence,

Haste claryfyed and put vnto flight

Alle mysty wedrys parlyous for pestilence.

⁴⁸ Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300*, p. 268.

⁴⁹ See also, Norman F. Cantor, *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World it Made* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2001), pp. 6–7.

[O heavenly star, most comfortable light,
Which, with thy ghostly gracious Influence,
Has clarified and put unto flight
All misty weather perils for pestilence].⁵⁰

Such turmoil resulted in widespread anxiety which manifested itself in such as the Flagellant movement who expressed their woes in public self-flagellation in an attempt to appease an angry God. Moreover, economic and social unrest pointing towards rebellion began to surface. In the Church's domain unrest was rife, evidenced by the Great Schism in fractious papal authority which continued to the early fifteenth century.

Judy Ann Ford highlights that in England at the time of *Mirk's Festial* the two significant major events were the Great Revolt in 1381, and the heretical emergence of the Lollardy. Both events were to a certain extent fuelled by the catastrophes of the plague, yet the Lollards, following the teachings of John Wycliffe, were seen as a reaction to the mystical side of Catholic sacraments and rituals. From a scribal perspective, these events caused significant affect upon the written word, as Wycliffe was heavily influenced by John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (1340–99) who played a considerable role in the promotion of the use of Middle English in government.⁵¹

Ford suggests that the main fear of this English infiltration into a previously Latin sphere was not so much that it was a threat to the language itself, but more a concern that the laity were not educated sufficiently in order to grasp or express the sacred nuances in their own tongue. Nicholas Watson highlights the volatile relationship '[...] between a barbarous mother tongue and under-educated readership with a carnal understanding of the truth [...] a lack of grammatical regulation in the vernacular comes to imply the unruliness of those who

⁵⁰ Carleton Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939, rpt. 1952, 1962), p. 206.

⁵¹ See also, Martha Rampton, 'The Peasants Revolt of 1381 and the Written Word', *Comitatus*, 24:1 (1993): 45–56. Also, Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), p.3.

speak it'.⁵² Yet Ford insist the *Festial* is not a work of rebellion, more a comfort to the downtrodden. However, Stephen Justice suggests it was more a case of the vernacular asserting itself.⁵³

The popularity of the vernacular sermon reached its zenith in the late Middle Ages, playing a fundamental role in the formation of religious culture, together with plays and pageants. A significant purpose of the sermon was to relate the life of the saint whose feast occurred on that day. Ford points out that *Mirk's Festial* was the most widely employed vernacular sermon collection, this is evident by the considerable amount of manuscripts and printed editions.⁵⁴ Susan Powell notes that there are twenty-six extant versions of *Mirk's Festial* in manuscript form, plus a further twelve of *Festial* sermons, the latest was written in 1515.⁵⁵ Though little is known of Mirk himself it is noted that, as abbot, he would be well placed to have access to monastic literature to inform his writing.⁵⁶

However, far from focusing on the fire and brimstone approach to repentance, prevalent at the time, Ford proposes that the narrative holds a quality of fantasy akin to fireside tales of adventure, 'illustrated stories with a moral purpose', perhaps speaking directly to its original intended audience who would have been living in a rural community built on oral tradition and superstition.⁵⁷ As a rural canon and then abbot, Mirk would have been very much aware of such nuances. G.R. Owst goes so far as to suggest that Mirk preferred fantastical tales for his sermons rather than relying on canonical scriptures.⁵⁸ The *Festial* includes the expected canon of saints such as Saint John the Baptist and Saint

⁵² Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, The Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum*, 70: 4 (1995), p. 844.

⁵³ Stephen Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381, The New Historicism*, Studies in Cultural Poetics, 26 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), p. 56.

⁵⁴ Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's Festial: Orthodoxy, Lollardy and the Common People in Fourteenth Century England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), p. 9.

⁵⁵ Susan Powell, *The Medieval Church in the Sixteenth Century: The Post Reformation History of a Fourteenth Century Sermon Collection* (Salford: European Studies Research Institute, 1998), pp. 2–9.

⁵⁶ A.I. Doyle, *Publications by Members of Religious Orders: Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1475*, ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 115.

⁵⁷ Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's Festial: Orthodoxy, Lollardy and the Common People in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), p. 13.

⁵⁸ G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c.1350–1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 245.

Stephen, but it also includes insular saints such as Saint Winifred and Saint Etheldred.⁵⁹ Both saints are seventh century, Saint Winifred was local to Mirk's area of Shropshire, therefore her inclusion would be relevant to the local people. Saint Etheldred, on the other hand, named as Saint Audrey in the text, was more widely renowned throughout England due to her royal connections and as a renowned abbess. Yet, the life of Saint Aldhelm, the subject of this thesis, is not included in *Mirk's Festival* despite his tale, so to speak, being an ideal candidate for inclusion. Aldhelm's credentials, as will be explored in Chapters Four, Five and Six, include his seventh-century era, royal connections, elevation to abbot and bishop, and events and miracles in his life that could easily grace the fantastical narrative style of Mirk's text.

Popularity and Influence of Pilgrimage on the Cult of Saints

In his introduction, Colin Morris indicates that Christian devotion was deepened by pilgrimage, a following in the footsteps, often literally, of earlier pilgrim fathers on routes of sanctity to sites of sacred devotion. The notion of pilgrimage as a journey of faith towards the Promised Land became predominant in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, evident in liturgy and religious songs of the time.⁶⁰ In his study of the pilgrimage of the Angevin Kings of England 1154–1272, Vincent states that the religion of English kings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in particular with reference to pilgrimage, deserves further study. From the time of Henry II (1133–1188) pilgrimage held a significant role in the life of kings, reflecting the Anglo-Saxon and Norman influences of past family traits. Henry's Anjou ancestor, Count Fulk Nerra, had carried out a number of penitential pilgrimages to Jerusalem.⁶¹

Whilst there has been no evidence of pilgrimage of Anglo-Saxon kings to Jerusalem, a number had visited Rome, including King Cnut in 1027. More notably, an early surviving

⁵⁹ Theodore Ebbe, ed., *Mirk's Festival: A Collection of Homilies*, Extra Series/Early English Text Society 96 (Millwood, NY: Kraus reprint 1975, of 1905).

⁶⁰ Colin Morris, 'Introduction', in Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 2–9.

⁶¹ Vincent, 'The Pilgrimage of the Angevin Kings of England 1154–1272', pp. 12–45. See also B.S. Bachrach, 'The Pilgrimages of Fulk Nerra Count of the Anjevins 987–1040', in Thomas F.X. Noble and John J. Contreni, eds., *Religion Culture and Society in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Honour of Richard E. Sullivan* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1987), pp. 205–217.

document containing communication between Offa and Charlemagne in the early ninth century, relates to safe passage of English pilgrims through Carolingian French soil.⁶² Moreover, Henry II's lands, which stretched from Durham to Limoges, possessed a considerable number of shrines and relics marking the way for Henry's committed pilgrimage. A distinction between genuine pilgrims and hangers-on, such as tinkers and other business folk, was made by medieval writers. This was particularly noted in Canon Law where definition and garb are noted, indicating a solemn vow to be taken prior to departure regarding the purpose of the pilgrimage, for instance penitence, plus the carrying of the pilgrim insignia of scrip, or pouch, and staff. Pilgrimage to Rome and its relationship to miracles will be addressed in detail later with reference to the manuscripts studied in this thesis.

Morris conveys that pilgrimage of the English faithful to shrines overseas were much more numerous than those from abroad to England during the medieval period. The primary saint for those from abroad to visit in England was Thomas of Canterbury. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400) depicts stories gathered during a pilgrimage from London to Canterbury to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas. The representation of a significant church or cathedral's memory is evident in its shrine or shrines. This memory designates the personality, life-force, and allegory of the building and its surrounds. The relic, as the fundamental sanctity of the shrine, is actual and symbolic as memoria in the medieval idea of pilgrimage and can be seen as a bedrock to religious life for both clergy and laity.⁶³

Carole Rawcliffe considers the pilgrimage search for a cure as being *Christus Medicus* referring to the life passion and miracles of Saint Edmund, English King and martyr from the fourteenth century. This saint's life holds an account of a young female, who after suffering from a swelling ailment which had been unsuccessfully redressed by her physician, called upon *Celestus Medicus*, heavenly physician, to come to her aid. Her earthly physician then urges her to visit the shrine of Saint Edmund housed within the Benedictine Abbey of Bury. Rawcliffe points out that within the text the woman's physician is described as *prudens medicus*, which is a rare admission of human limitation.⁶⁴ Rawcliffe further

⁶² Nicholas Vincent, 'The Pilgrimage of the Angevin Kings of England 1154–1272', p. 14–17.

⁶³ Morris 'Introduction', pp. 2–9. See also Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

⁶⁴ Carole Rawcliffe, 'Curing Bodies and Healing Souls: Pilgrimage and the Sick in Medieval East Anglia', in Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience*

indicates that rather than approaching shrines with a penitential and remorseful attitude East Anglian pilgrims saw saints as vessels of healing, or indeed destruction, comparing them favourably with twentieth-century pilgrims in rural France who, via suitable rites were conciliated.⁶⁵

In his consideration of local pilgrimage in late medieval England Duffy highlights that during this period such reverentially held national shrines, such as those of Canterbury and Walsingham, saw English pilgrims arrive in their droves, as well as a consistent number travelling beyond their shores to the sacred continental destinations of Rocamadour in France and Compostela in Spain, as well as venturing to the ultimate destinations of Rome and Jerusalem. However, Duffy points out that the vast majority of the numerous shrines and pilgrimage sites were in close vicinity to the pilgrims' homes, either in the next parish or town.⁶⁶ In his focus on the East Anglian Saint Walstan, who, Duffy notes, is not included in any surviving ecclesiastical manuscript, the saint's cult was confined to the near surrounding area of his grave at Bawburgh.⁶⁷

In the medieval period pilgrimage across Europe to the burial sites or shrines of saints were given devotional structure by the assignation of the date the saint died as their official feast day. For example, Saint Aldhelm's feast day is the twenty-fifth of May, the date of his natural death, Saint Francis of Assisi is venerated on the third of October, which is also the date of his natural death, Saint Thomas of Canterbury's feast day is on the twenty-ninth of December, the date of his assassination. A saint's feast day was also accompanied by dedicated church services and community festivals, during which the tradition of narrating the life of the saint to the congregation was carried out by and large by ecclesiastical or monastic representatives. This custom became an integral part of the homily, or sermon, in

from Becket to Bunyan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 108–140. See also T. Arnold, ed., *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey*, 3 vols (London: Printed for H.M. stationery office by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890–96), p. 134.

⁶⁵ For a comparison with earlier pagan invocation of supernatural aid see Stephen Wilson, ed., *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 29–39.

⁶⁶ Eamon Duffy, 'The Dynamics of Pilgrimage in Late Medieval England', in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 166.

⁶⁷ See also Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 155–205.

the church service on the saint's feast day. For many, this Christian religious tradition continues to the present day.

Individual lives

As well as legendary collections of lives of saints, single accounts also appeared in Middle English. For example, Simon Winter identifies the *Life of Saint Jerome*, written under the patronage of Duchess Margaret of Clarence used as the text of choice for inclusion in a the *Gilte Legende* collection.⁶⁸ In contrast, an anonymous account of Saint Alexis is to be found in a number of versions of the *SEL* in the late fourteenth century.⁶⁹

Catherine Sanok suggests that the individual life of seventh-century English saint, Saint Werburge, composed by the Benedictine monk Henry Bradshaw in the late fifteenth century, is as much about English identity, in particular that of Chester and its Benedictine abbey, as it was about the pious and holy life of the saint. Moreover, Saint Werburge's royal lineage is also far from dismissed as irrelevant within the narrative.⁷⁰

According to Helen Birkett, the Cistercian hagiographer Jocelyn of Furness (1175–1241) reflected in his compositions patronage regarding the saint selected. For example, patrons from Ireland and Scotland are reflected in the *Vita S. Patricii* [Life of Saint Patrick] († 461) and the *Vita Kentigerni* [Life of Saint Mungo] († 603).⁷¹ Birkett holds that Jocelyn's *Vita S. Helenae*, [Life of Saint Helena] with its 'idealised narrative mirror', reflects the early thirteenth-century ideal which would later be commissioned by an undisclosed community of women in England. It is further argued that the original objective of these lives and the way in which they were read now requires further study.

⁶⁸ Simon Winter, 'The Life of St Jerome', in E. Gordon Whatley, Anne B. Thompson and Robert K. Upchurch, eds., *Saints' Lives in Middle English Collections*, Middle English Text Series 68 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute publications, 2004), pp. 15–16.

⁶⁹ Upchurch 'The Goed Fyn of St Alexis in a Middle English Version of his Legend', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 102. 1 (2003) pp. 1–20.

⁷⁰ Catherine Sanok, *Her Life Historical: Exemplarity and Female Saints' Lives in Late Medieval England*, The Middle Ages Series, 271 (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. 83.

⁷¹ Helen Birkett, *The Saints' Lives of Jocelyn of Furness: Hagiography, Patronage and Ecclesiastical Politics* (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), p. 1.

Rosalind Love posits that the eleventh-century accounts of the female saints of Ely have somewhat dubious content as their original source would have been Bede.⁷² Furthermore, a significant amount of information appears to be fanciful addition rather than being true to the source. The saints are seventh century; the foremost being Saint Aethelthryth, (636–679) of royal descent, daughter of Anna, King of the East Angles. Married twice, her notable second marriage, after the death of her first husband, Tondberht of South Gyrwe, in 665, was to Ecgrith King of Northumbria. After twelve years she left her unconsummated marriage and entered convent life at Coldingham, Berwickshire.

Notably, this abbey was governed by her aunt, Aebbe. Aethelthryth then established a double monastery at Ely in 673. On her death, Bede tells us that at her translation her body was incorrupt. This translation was carried out by her sister Seaxburgh who took on her role at Ely.⁷³ Love further notes that a pre-Conquest early eighth-century liturgical calendar of Saint Willibrord does not contain the feast of Aethelthryth (Paris, BNF, lat.10837). Moreover, a ninth-century Calendar (Oxford Bodleian Library, Digby 63), also fails to acknowledge her. However, post-conquest Benedictine calendars show Aethelthryth as a significantly venerated saint. Love suggests that this is due to Aethelthryth being the foundress of the Benedictine monasteries at Ely.

Eamon Duffy highlights the life of Saint Walstan. Despite his life not being recorded in manuscript form, it finally appeared, in considerable length, in 1516 in the printed edition of John Capgrave's the *Nova Legenda Anglie* [The New Legend of England] by Wynken de Worde. This version contains thirteen lives that are not present in Capgrave's (1393–1464) original the *Nova Legenda Anglie*.⁷⁴

Duffy posits that a number of these manuscripts can be identified as springing from new cults, or those who were gaining popularity, notably shrine legends such as Joseph of Arimathea whose cult had emerged in Glastonbury, Saint Walstan († 1016), and Saint William of Rochester († 1201), whose shrine resides to this day in Rochester Cathedral in Kent, the second oldest cathedral in England. Saint Walstan, being of royal Saxon birth, denounces

⁷² Rosalind C. Love, ed. and trans., *Gocelin of St-Bertin: The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon press, 2004), p. 13–23.

⁷³ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (trans. Leo Shirley-Price, revised by R.E. Latham, (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 19.

⁷⁴ Eamon Duffy, 'The Dynamics of Pilgrimage in Late Medieval England', in Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 164–177.

his sovereignty to reign and takes up a life of labour and poverty on the land. The life concludes that the saint demonstrated chastity, self-denial and acts of charity, such as giving away his shoes to the poor. Following his death, miraculous accounts ensue regarding healing and the appearance of springs.

It is further suggested by Duffy that this life highlights two distinctive features, that of the classic tale of a figure of nobility renouncing his birth right and living a life of religious devotion, yet it is also tinged with what Duffy regards as a 'priggish' clerical quality in the written style, in particular when Walstan receives a visitation from an angel who discloses his impending death. Thus told, Walstan seeks *viaticum*, a singular administration of the Eucharist given to those approaching death as part of *Extreme Unction, Last Rights*. He markedly discards his scythe at midday on the Saturday previous to his death, an act of defiance regarding the profanity of labour on the afternoon of the Sabbath. After he seeks out his *viaticum* Walstan passes away whilst working in the fields the following Monday. This emphasis in the text is seen as a clear indication of the idealised parishioner seeking obedience and penitence.⁷⁵ In the eleventh century there emerged the *Kentish Royal Legend*, also known as the *Secgan* in the vernacular of the time, which contained lives of saints and list of resting places from the seventh to the eighth centuries. It speaks in particular of Saint Mildrith, and of the founding of the Abbey at Thanet.⁷⁶

Aelfric (955–1010) and Wulfstan (1002–1023) both compiled lives of Saint Aethelwold (904–984), as noted earlier. Wulfstan and Aelfric both studied under Aethelwold at Winchester, yet whilst their accounts are similar in content, they are different in style. Michael Winterbottom posits that it is unclear that such contemporaneous scribes are writing independently, or abbreviating or expanding on each other's work.⁷⁷ Aelfric's account is considerably shorter than Wulfstan's, and the life is of simpler style, which Winterbottom indicates is synonymous with the scribe's work. As Abbot of Eynsham his hagiographical works were written in Anglo-Saxon, yet his philosophy regarding style is evident in his prefaces of translations from Latin, where he defends his brevity in stating that he wishes to

⁷⁵ Duffy also notes that a significant verse version of Saint Walstan's life appeared at the close of the fifteenth century as a triptych panel hung close to his shrine in Bawburgh church as an aid for pilgrims.

⁷⁶ Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 1. See also, D.W. Rollason, *The Mildrith Legend: A Study in Early Medieval Hagiography in England*. Studies in the Early History of Britain, 8, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982).

⁷⁷ Michael Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, Toronto Medieval Latin Texts, pp. 2–5.

portray the sense of meaning in a simple and uncomplicated fashion. This can be seen as in stark contrast to Bede's earlier the *Ecclesiastical History* which relies heavily on allegorical style. Aelfric's stance was designed to help the reader to understand the essence therein, rather than be baffled or bewitched by elaboration.

In contrast, Wulfstan's account contains elaborate sentences and somewhat obscure vocabulary not designed to assist the reader in interpretation. However, perhaps this was Wulfstan's way of portraying the life in an other-worldly light, thereby emphasising its reverence. Winterbottom informs that neither scribe's style is that of the classical models. Wulfstan's work echoes the essence of biblical phraseology and is synonymous with the Anglo-Latin tendency towards ornate and stylised prose of tenth-century hagiography. The style of both authors reflects their role and personality: Aelfric, administer and educator; Wulfstan as artist and craftsman. This close textual comparison is a method this study will develop for Saint Aldhelm. Saint Gretsch considers Aelfric's life of Aethelwold as his most notable work, as it incorporates such scholarly elements as defining the 'essence of kingship' and translating the Christian message from its Latin edifice to English vernacular.⁷⁸

The *Golden Legend* in Medieval England

The *South English Legendary* (*SEL*) was written in verse whereas the *Gilte Legende* and Caxton's the *Golden Legend* are in prose. With reference to the *SEL* amongst the various versions in extant of sixty exist in manuscript tradition, with inclusions and redactions, there are few similarities between versions.⁷⁹ Each individual saint's life varies in length, from in excess of one thousand words in the case of Thomas of Canterbury, to those with fewer than one hundred words. The physiognomies of the *SEL* are that it is simple in instructional religious dogma, it employs basic phraseology, and it demonstrates clear lack of adherence to the original Latin narrative devices. Therefore, instead of long, descriptive accounts there are

⁷⁸ Mechthild Gretsch, *Aelfric and the Cult of Saints in late Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1–32.

⁷⁹ Anne B. Thompson, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative in the South English Legendary* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), p. 3.

short, dramatic ones. It appears designed to connect with local audiences through colloquial rhetoric.⁸⁰

Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill state that the earliest 'orderly' *SEL* manuscript is Harley 2277 held in the British Museum. However, the earliest surviving manuscript is Laud 108 which is incomplete.⁸¹ It is pointed out that, despite the mutual title there are variations in length of accounts of saints' lives across the manuscripts studied. As an example, the order of the prologue which sets out the content of the life of Saint Bridget of Kildare (450–523).

D'Evelyn and Will point out that certain accounts within the *SEL* cannot be correctly identified as legends of saints.⁸² For example, in the life of Saint Michael, the text refers to fallen angels becoming agents of evil and then culminates in medieval thought regarding physiology and nature. It could also be argued that Michael should not be identified as a saint, being an archangel he cannot be defined as having taken corporeal form, a pre-requisite for human sanctity. Instead, a reading of Saint Michael can be identifiable as a feast day, similar to, yet distinct from, the feast day of an earthly saint. D'Evelyn and Will also refer to the lives of Saint Brendan and Patrick in a somewhat dismissive manner, describing Brendan's life as a 'wonder-voyage'. However, this does not dismiss these accounts as being categorised as of true lives of saints. Moreover, D'Evelyn and Will claim that the All Saints life is merely a propaganda device in order to encourage offerings. This is in contrast to Voragine's the *Legenda aurea*, written ten years earlier, in which it is pointed out that All Saints was written for those saints not mentioned in the main corpus of the text so as not to neglect them.⁸³

What is undetermined is the audience envisioned in the *SEL*. Initial indicators appear to imply that the *SEL* was intended for clergy to use in church services for local congregations. However, the inclusion of such colourful saints as Mary of Egypt, plus the varied lengths of each legend suggest that the document is not practical for such use. Gordon

⁸⁰ Klaus Jankofsky, 'National Characteristics in the Portrayal of English Saints in the South English Legendary' in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate and Timea Szell, eds., (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 83.

⁸¹ Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill, eds., *The South English Legendary: Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 145 and British Museum MS Harley 2277 etc.*, EETS, III, 244 (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1959, for 1957), rpt. 1969, pp. 15–16.

⁸² Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill, eds., *The South English Legendary: Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 145 and British Museum MS Harley 2277 etc.*, EETS, III, 244 (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1959, for 1957), rpt. 1969, pp. 24–25.

⁸³ Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, p. 658.

E. Whatley, Anne B. Thompson and Robert K. Upchurch qualify that the *SEL* sometimes irreverent style also implies that it would, in many cases, not be appropriate to be used as a text for solemn worship.⁸⁴ However, the implication offered by Thompson and Upchurch that the *SEL* was perhaps too crass a document to be used in the solemnity of holy worship fails to acknowledge that whilst saints such as Mary of Egypt may be colourful the example of her life offers a message of penance, grace and redemption. Such fundamental Christian tenets can, therefore, be considered highly appropriate for such a setting as congregational church worship.

Writing in verse was relatively common in the period. In the fifteenth-century learned men such as John Lydgate, Osbern Bokenham, and John Capgrave applied their lyrical style to hagiography. Nevertheless, the majority of individual saints' lives are anonymous like the *SEL*.⁸⁵ Lydgate was a prolific writer of verse, reflecting the style of Chaucer. His hagiographical accounts include the lives of Saint Edmund and Fremund composed to honour the visit of Henry VI to Bury, he also wrote a life of Saint Alban.⁸⁶ In Bokenham's introduction to his the *Mappula Anglia*, which Alice Spence informs is a partial translation of Higden's fourteenth-century the *Polychronicon*, he stipulates this source for his material in his translations of the lives of Saint Cedd, Felix, Edward, and Oswald.⁸⁷ It is also indicated that the purpose of the *Mappula Angliae* was to be considered as its companion text to the lives of English Saints that had previously been translated. Bokenham adds that he used the *Legenda aurea* as a further source, among others.⁸⁸ A.C. Spearing notes that while Capgrave's earliest life of a saint was his life of Saint Norbert, Capgrave's later life of Saint Katherine is a verse life of 8,372 lines consisting of five books, remarkably similar in structure to Chaucer's *Troilus*, suggesting it was used as a model.⁸⁹

It may be verse versions of lives of Saints are more readily absorbed by the reader or recipient, and are perhaps more convivial for both a collective and individual audience. A

⁸⁴ Whatley, Thompson and Upchurch, eds., *Saints' Lives in Middle English Collections*, p. 18.

⁸⁵ Manfred Görlach, *Studies in Middle English Saints' Legends* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1998), pp. 464–469.

⁸⁶ K. L. Scott, 'Lydgate's Lives of SS Edmund and Fremund: A Newly Discovered Manuscript', *Viator*, 13 (1982): 335–366.

⁸⁷ Alice Spence, *Language, Lineage and Location in the Works of Osbern Bokenham* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), p. 15.

⁸⁸ Sanok, *Her Life Historical*, p.55.

⁸⁹ A.C. Spearing, *Medieval Autographies: The 'I' of the Text* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), p. 263.

Middle English version of the *Legenda aurea* discovered in 2004 in Abbotsford House on the Scottish borders, among a collection in Sir Walter Scott's library, is a mixture of both verse and prose and is attributed by Horobin to Bokenham.⁹⁰ The claim that the text is the *Legenda aurea* is evident as Bokenham refers to his manuscript as such within the text.⁹¹ The Abbotsford House the *Legenda aurea* is a key manuscript containing a life of Saint Aldhelm which will be studied later.

Mirk's Festial, written by John Mirk in the 1380s, was the most popular vernacular collection of sermons regarding Saints' feast days.⁹² Mirk, an Augustinian Abbot in Shropshire produced his work specifically for lowly, under-educated clergy and their rural audiences. Mirk tells us in his preface that his *Festial* draws heavily from Voragine's the *Legenda aurea* with additions. The manuscript is similar in structure to the *Legenda aurea* in that it contains lives of saints within the liturgical calendar. The *Festial* contains 74 sermons in total. However, the lives differ from those in the *Legenda aurea* both in length and content:

By myne owne febul lettrure Y fele how yt faruth by othur that bene in the same degree that hauen charge of soulus [...] I haue drawe this treti sewing owt of *Legenda aurea* with more addying to, so he that hathe lust to study therein, he schal fynde redy of all the principale festis of the yere a schort sermon needful for hym to techym and othur for to lerne.

[Because of my own meagre learning I feel how it is with others who are in the same situation, who have cure of souls [...] I have drawn up this treatise based on the *Legenda aurea* but with more added, so that he who desires to study it will find ready all the principal feast of the year a short sermon useful for his teaching and others' learning.]⁹³

⁹⁰ Stephen Horobin, 'The Angle of Oblivioun: A Lost Medieval Manuscript Discovered in Walter Scott's Collection'. *Times Literary Supplement* 11 November, (2005): 12–13. See also, Alice Spencer, *Language, Lineage and Location in the Works of Osbern Bokenham* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 8–13.

⁹¹ See the beginning of Chapter Six for photographic evidence.

⁹² Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's Festial: Orthodoxy, Lollardy and the Common People in Fourteenth Century England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 2–13.

⁹³ MS Cotton Claudius A. II, fol. 1v; quoted in Fletcher and Powell, 'The Origins of a Fifteenth-Century Sermon Collection', p. 95. Alan J. Fletcher and Susan Powell, 'The Origins of a Fifteenth-Century Sermon Collection: MSS Harley 2247 and Royal 18B xxv', *Leeds Studies in English*, 10 (1978), pp. 74–96.

A later legendary composed in Latin towards the end of the fourteenth century entitled the *Sanctilogium Angliae, Walliae, Scotiae et Hiberniae* had been compiled by John of Tynemouth containing 156 lives, with five further saints added as appendices. His main source was material from Saint Alban's Abbey, among other monasteries. He also added antiphons and collects to the end of a number of the saints' lives, as well as supportive narratives, indicating the lives were used on feast days during Mass. Manfred Görlach suggests this could have been an initial source for the *Kalendre of the Newe Legende of Englande*.⁹⁴

A number of scholars focus upon the role of national identity in post-Conquest hagiography, such as Katherine J. Lewis who considers that, in the fifteenth century, English was closely linked to the lives of Saints.⁹⁵ Their influence and the influence of other texts such as the *Chronicles* related a connection between the past and the present, fuelling a sense of collective national identity which had developed throughout the medieval period. Lewis contends that evidence for this continuous link between past and present is demonstrated in the first English translation of the *Legenda aurea* which was written c.1438 entitled the *Gilte Legende*. Of the eight extant manuscripts, three from the fifteenth century contain additional lives from the Anglo-Saxon era.⁹⁶ Görlach posits that their source is the thirteenth century *SEL* which had been written in verse and converted to prose for the *Gilte Legende*.⁹⁷ Auvo Kurvinen points out that the inclusion of these lives are placed not among the non-English

⁹⁴ Manfred Görlach, *The Kalendre of the Newe Legende of Englande: Edited from Pynson's Printed Edition, 1516*, Middle English Texts, 27 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1994), pp. 7–8.

⁹⁵ Katherine J. Lewis, 'Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives, History and National Identity in Late Medieval England', in Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Philips eds., *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), pp. 160–170. See also, Jill Fredrick, 'The South English Legendary: Anglo-Saxon Saints and National Identity', in Donald Scragg and Carole Weinberg eds., *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxon from the Thirteenth-Century to the Twentieth-Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 57–73.

⁹⁶ Katherine J. Lewis, 'Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives, History and National Identity in Late Medieval England', in Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Philips eds., *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), pp. 160–170. pp. 160–170.

⁹⁷ Manfred Görlach, *Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary* (Leeds: Leeds University Press, 1974), p.5. See also, Hamer, Richard, & Vida Russell, eds., *Supplementary Lives in Some Manuscripts of the Gilte Legend, O.S.*, 315 (Oxford: Published for The Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. iv–xxvi.

saints, interspersed in order of feast days, but as a single block of lives, clearly to be viewed as distinct.⁹⁸

The significance of the inclusion of these lives, according to Lewis, may be that they represent key periods in the formation of nationhood during which these saints lived. It is notable that England is mentioned as distinct in these lives, for example, in the life of Saint Cuthbert it is stated that he was ‘borne in Englonde’.⁹⁹ Lewis further highlights that all the Anglo-Saxon saints’ lives in the *Gilte Legende* are also included in the chronicle the *Polychronicon* which, rather than being a devotional text, employs lives of saints as a vehicle to tell the history of the founding of a nation. Both Caxton and Bokenham recommended reading the *Polychronicon* together with works of the Anglo-Saxon Saints’ lives to broaden the historical content for a fifteenth century readership who may be unfamiliar with the content.¹⁰⁰ Lewis adds, however, that the significance of local cults and shrines also play a key part in community coherence, rather than national collectiveness.

The Emergence of Print and its Effects on Hagiography

The advent of print in England in the 1470s brought opportunities to disseminate all manner of writings more widely. Amongst the array of statutes and legal documents, liturgical books appeared in the form of didactic devotion for the faithful. Duffy tells us that among such ecclesiastical printed works were a vast number of Latin Primers, Books of Hours, awash with prayers of indulgence and images designed to attract customers; in effect a form of early print marketing.¹⁰¹ In his introduction to his translation of Voragine’s the *Legenda aurea*, Ryan indicates that the dawn of printing saw hundreds of printed versions of the *Legenda aurea* appear, both in original vernacular Latin and in every European language.¹⁰² The three most prominent figures in the printing world in pre-Reformation England were William Caxton (1422–1491), Wynken de Worde (1455–1543), and Richard

⁹⁸ Auvo Kurvinen, *Caxton’s Golden Legend and the Manuscripts of the Gilte Legende*, *Neophilologische Mitteilungen*, 60 (1959): 353–375.

⁹⁹ Richard Hamer and Vida Russell, eds., *Supplementary Lives in Some Manuscripts of the Gilte Legend*, O.S., 315 (Oxford: Published for The Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 217.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis, ‘Anglo-Saxon Saints’ Lives’, p. 167.

¹⁰¹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400–1580* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 77–79.

¹⁰² Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, p. 658, p. xiii.

Pynson (1448–1529). As well as being conservatively religious, these characters were above all businessmen who were keen to exploit this lucrative market.¹⁰³

Duffy further indicates that the vast majority of printed works at this time were also copies of existing religious texts such as *Mirk's Festial*, and the *Ars Moriendi* [The Art of Dying] (1415–1450), two Latin texts on Christian religious protocol in the art of dying. The content of this text would later be reflected in the life of Saint Walstan, produced in print in 1516 by Wynken de Worde in his translation of Capgrave's the *Nova Legenda Anglie*, previously discussed, in which his predicted death and preparation for it follows the *Ars Moriendi*.

Whilst the original text of *Mirk's Festial* was aimed at rural clergy, a revised version was later produced in the fifteenth century which appears to be angled towards a more discerning, learned audience. In this version, Ford informs, approximately half the saints' lives were omitted, This then becomes the model for printed editions.¹⁰⁴ The first to print *Mirk's Festial* was Caxton in 1483; the best known edition was in 1532 by Wynkyn de Worde.¹⁰⁵

Caxton's 1483 the *Golden Legende* is the first printed version which, in the forty years that followed, was re-printed a number of times. Caxton claims that the main source of his incunabulum was taken from Jean de Vignay's translation of the *Legenda aurea* into French prose. Caxton also employed Voragine's Latin Vulgate original, as well as other sources.¹⁰⁶ Görlach, informs us that Caxton's the *Golden Legende* is the most extensive extant legendary to be found in Middle English to be considered as an authoritative work. Görlach considers that Caxton's text was the first translation of the *Legenda aurea*, which had originally been written one hundred and fifty years previously, positing that due to the popularity of Middle English texts since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, such as the *SEL*, there had been no

¹⁰³ See also H.S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers 1475–1557* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 65–93, and for Wynken de Worde pp. 239–76. Also, William Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and Print Capitalism*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), pp. xxvi and 416.

¹⁰⁴ Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's Festial: Orthodoxy, Lollardy and the Common People in Fourteenth Century England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 2–13.

¹⁰⁵ Susan Powell, 'John Mirk's Festial and the Pastoral Programme', *Leeds Studies in English*, 22 (1991), pp. 85–102. See also Alan J. Fletcher, 'Unnoticed Sermons from John Mirk's Festial', *Speculum*, 55:3 (1980), 514–22. Also, Alexandra Da Costa, 'From Manuscript into Print: The "Festial", The Four Sermons, and the "Quattour Sermones"', *Medium Aevum* 79.1 (2010): 47–67.

¹⁰⁶ Manfred Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, new series 6 (Leeds: University of Leeds press, 1974), pp. viii–x.

demand for such a translation. However, the fifteenth century saw the popularity of texts like the *SEL* waning. Görlach suggests this was possibly due to the archaic verse style and he considers the genre was in need of a re-think, and it was a significant undertaking to translate the complete the *Legenda aurea*.¹⁰⁷ It requires noting, however, that Caxton's translation does not represent an exact replica of Voragine's listed saints.¹⁰⁸ The emergence of print from the manuscript tradition of hagiography which occurred in the narrative of the life of Saint Aldhelm will be explored in this thesis.

Caxton's printed version saw successive editions include saints not in the original the *Legenda aurea*. Kurvinen indicates that Caxton used the *Gilte Legende* as a source for his the *Golden Legende*.¹⁰⁹ Duffy posits that it includes saints who had become recently popular, but were not present in earlier legendaries, such as Bede's. On a less grand scale was Pynson's printed translation of Capgrave's the *Nova Legenda Anglie* which was an abbreviated version. It has been argued that Pynson's version was probably intended for married laity to promote devotion to saints.¹¹⁰

Görlach states that this printed text, produced in 1516 as Wynken de Worde's the *Nova Legenda Anglie*, was fashioned by Pynson as the *Kalendre of the Newe Legende of Englande* which contains 168 lives of saints. It is indicated that, in historical context, the timing of this production came very close on the heels of the Reformation, suggesting it was, perhaps, a final attempt to create a comprehensive book of lives for the English. Despite its weighty content and attention to the final resting place of the saint, its visual structure, and occasional printing errors, appear to suggest it was not as laboriously and reverently prepared as is initially suggested.¹¹¹ Görlach acknowledges Karl Horstmann as the original editor of

¹⁰⁷ Manfred Görlach, *Studies in Middle English Saints' Legends* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1998), p.71.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Jeremy, 'Caxton's *Golden Legend* and Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*', *Speculum*, 21:2 (1946): 212–221.

¹⁰⁹ Auvo Kurvinen, 'Caxton's *Golden Legend* and the Manuscripts of the *Gilte Legende*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 60 (1959): 353–375.

¹¹⁰ See also, N.F. Blake, *Caxton and His World*, *The Language Library*, 23 (New York: London House and Maxwell, 1969), pp. 117–123.

¹¹¹ Manfred Görlach, *The Kalendre of the Newe Legende of Englande: Edited from Pynson's Printed Edition, 1516*, *Middle English Texts*, 27 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1994), pp. 7–8.

this text.¹¹² The majority of printed books were in English, though some were in Latin. Thus, printed works were instrumental in religious devotion and teaching in vernacular English.

Conclusion

Bede's collection of saint's lives within the *Ecclesiastical History* written in prose, gave way to later legendaries in English verse, such as *SEL*. These were then followed subsequently by prose legends which resemble the *Legenda aurea* in structure regarding the liturgical year and feast days of saints. Indeed, some legendaries clearly acknowledge Voragine as model, such as *Mirk's Festial*. However, their uniqueness lies in the English saints that were included or redacted for various reasons during the unsettled Middle Ages, which also affected the language and style in which they were written. The shift from manuscript to print caused changes to occur in the content and structure of the lives of saints, reaching a wider eager audience and a more mercantile agenda.

In order to investigate topoi in lives of saints the following chapter examines themes within hagiographical texts. The chapter explores studies which juxtapose conceptual phenomena which emerge from writings of lives of saints. For instance, the life of Saint Francis, which has been considered as focusing on the visible demonstration of poverty, abandonment of visual wealth, as a means to inner 'richness' in connecting with the Divine. For Francis to appear in such a way may therefore validate to onlookers the virtue of the saint and his followers' spiritual ideology.¹¹³

¹¹² Karl Horstmann edited numerous Middle English religious texts between 1870 and 1905. See also, Pierce Butler, *Legenda Aurea, Légende dorée, Golden Legend: A Study of Caxton's Golden Legend with Special Reference to its Relations to the Earlier Prose Traditions* (Baltimore, NJ: Murphy, 1899), pp. 1–20.

¹¹³ Andrew M. Beresford and Lesley K. Twomey, 'Visions of Hagiography: From the Gaze to Spiritual Vision in Medieval Lives of Saints,' *La Corónica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures*, 42.1 (2013): 103–132.

Chapter Four

Hagiographical Themes in Studies on the Nature of Holiness

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to investigate studies in themes in hagiography in order to highlight their relevance to events in the manuscript and print versions of the life of Saint Aldhelm explored in this thesis. Themes specific to the nature of holiness will be examined, and how they relate to events in Aldhelm's life which give credence to his holiness. In this regard, the themes include the shift from oral tradition to text and the effect this had on the longevity of spoken narratives of holiness. It will also include geographical context of hagiographical narratives in the European tradition and the relationship between memory and the past. A focus on the personal background of a saint and its significance to holiness will lend itself to exploration of the life of Aldhelm, as he is both of royal lineage and promoted to the role of bishop. Be they ecclesiastic, lay, or of royal lineage, these themes can have a profound effect upon the nature of holiness and how it is portrayed.

Within the realms of the hagiographical narrative numerous themes, subliminally or overtly, are designed to persuade the audience of the holiness of the subject. Thus, sanctity is revealed either subtly in personality traits of exemplary living, or dramatically in the supernatural events of the miraculous or feats of unbearable human suffering. Such definition and evidence of holiness points the reader towards *imitatio Christi*, the imitation of the joys and sufferings of Christ.

Definitions of sanctity, or holiness, apparent in a person's life during the Middle Ages varied according to political, social and geographical context. The earliest accounts of Christian saints' lives are those of the prophets and martyrs in the New Testament. John the Baptist's prophecies and evangelisation brought about his martyrdom, even before the death of Christ, as accounted in Matthew 14:10 and Mark 6:27.¹ The early Christian mission of the Apostles, and later Saint Paul, to attest Christ's ministry to the wider world, also resulted in

¹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, pp. 963 and 991.

their martyrdom. Thus, early subsequent hagiographies are essentially martyrologies.² Therefore, they could be viewed as a historical record of the saint's life rather than being a political or social statement, however subtle. Yet, such subtlety does allow literary value regarding the political and social significance of the time. For example, the life of the proto-martyr Saint Stephen and the powerful account of his fortitude in the face of political and social castigation as portrayed in the *Legenda aurea*.³ With regard to early documentation, G. W. Bowersock points out that 'Martyrology and hagiography constitute a twin literary offspring of early Christianity, as opposed to homiletics, exegesis, or epistolography'.⁴ Thus, hagiographical texts can be viewed both as literature and history as well as a source of religious comfort and solace which encode ideals within.

Cazelles points out that the early martyrs carried out differing roles in the third, eighth, and thirteenth century in that their lives were not to be exemplified by the faithful in their own lives but more to be venerated from afar.⁵ Early martyrs' lives, by their act of martyrdom, demonstrate a sacred bond with the Divine. Thus, the invocation of these saints by the faithful to be intercessors on their behalf creates a potentially emblematic source of prayer.

Further discussed by Cazelles are the categories of saint who were not martyred, such as anchorites, who preferred a life of prayer and contemplative solitude. For example, the latter years of Saint Cuthbert's life in self-isolation on Inner Farne in Northumbria provides an Anglo-Saxon example.⁶ Classing saints as 'heroes', Cazelles claims that the functional role of a saints' life is to be both an intercessor and a punisher.⁷ Whilst the former is a familiar trait it can be argued that saint as 'punisher' does not appear to marry with the sublime qualities of sainthood.

² As an example see Christine Rauer, *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation and Commentary*, Anglo-Saxon Texts 10 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2016).

³ Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 45–47.

⁴ G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*. The Wiles Lectures Given at the Queen's University of Belfast. (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), p.94.

⁵ Cazelles, 'Introduction', pp. 1–17. See Bowersock for evidence that in early Christianity martyrdom was actively sort after from the examples of others. G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*, pp.2–3.

⁶ Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Leo Shirley-Price, revised by Latham, R.E. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 258.

⁷ Cazelles, 'Introduction' pp. 1–17.

Robert Mills points to penitent saints who practised extreme self-discipline and denial.⁸ As an example of self-mortification, Mills offers that of Saint Benedict whose extreme self-discipline had him throw himself naked into a thorn bush in order to escape the evils of lust. Hence, anchorites and penitents are not dissimilar in their explicit self-denial. Gavin Flood explores the concept of ascetism by considering the ascetic self both in Christianity and Eastern religions.⁹ In his consideration of self-mortification, Flood focuses on Saint Peter Damian an eleventh-century Italian Benedictine monk who vehemently practised and promoted ascetic disciplines. Among other austere practises Damian advocated silence, fasting, and self-flagellation. Flood highlights that the purpose of self-mortification is twofold ‘the rooting out of desire and penance for sin’.¹⁰ Harpham offers that the practice of ascetism also creates a twofold personality in constant conflict with itself ‘What distinguishes all forms of asceticism is the idea that the self is a composite structure containing an essence that transcends, and yet is intimately conjoined with, a substance or medium that is mutable, degraded, and rebellious’.¹¹ In essence, the ascetic constant struggle is soul verses body; to overcome the weaknesses of the body for the salvation of the soul.

Samantha Khan Herrick highlights political motivation in a saint’s life in an analysis of three surviving early Norman texts from the eleventh century of the lives of Taurinus and Vigor, and the *passio* of Nicasius who were early Christian bishops of the Merovingian period (500–750 AD).¹² When exploring the manuscripts, Herrick points out the mutability of the copies made regarding content, which nevertheless maintain sufficient common similarities to render them viable for study. However, it is indicated that determining if the texts are of long-term established use, or newer versions of older texts proves to be somewhat problematic with regard to establishing their importance to the region. Thus, in the research Herrick considers both external factors relating to political aspects of the eleventh century in what was to become Normandy, as well as internal elements of the text itself such as language and style.

⁸ Robert Mills, ‘Violence, Community, and the Materialisation of Belief’, in *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography*, Sarah Salih, ed., (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 87–103.

⁹ Flood, Gavin D. *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 181–190.

¹⁰ Flood, *The Aesthetic Self*, p. 186.

¹¹ Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative*, p. 36.

¹² Samantha Khan Herrick, *Imagining the Sacred Past: Hagiography and Power in Early Normandy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 13.

Herrick establishes that Taurinus, Vigor and Nicasius became prominent saints in early Normandy and their lives were written by three separate authors in the eleventh century, arguing that the scant information available to the authors of these early bishops of the region at the time suggest that their composition and similarities in content were created to help to establish a distant past which is commonly linked to early Normandy as the present.¹³ Thereby, creating an antecedent reflection in the now; the focus being that of present evangelisation and conversion reflecting the lives of the early bishops. Thus, Herrick suggests that the style and content of the lives of saints were written in order to establish a foundation on which to build an evangelical community of faith. It is of interesting note that these saints who were promoted as having such prominence and influence in the early Norman Church are, within two hundred years of their lives being written and popularised, not to be found in the hagiographical content of Voragine's the *Legenda aurea*.

From Oral Tradition to Text

Heffernan considers the transition from oral tradition of the life of a saint to text may have been detrimental. Whilst the written word had the potential to geographically expand the reach of knowledge of the saint's deeds, it can simultaneously render the oral tradition impotent.¹⁴ If a saint had recently died, his or her cult had already begun to establish itself in the oral tradition. Events in the lifetime of the saint which constitute them as deemed holy, for example miracles such as healings, then become almost secondary to subsequent evidence gleaned from motifs continuing after their death, those which develop during subsequent veneration at the saint's tomb. Hence, the verbal cult develops further unabated. Thus, the subsequent written hagiography is bound to rely upon both witness testimony and ensuing hearsay. Yet, once the life becomes a written text it is almost as though a 'full stop' has come to the verbal proceedings. It no longer has a voice with which to live and breathe through the mouths of those who instil the life with individual personal narrative. Instead, it is caught within the rigid confines of textual style and author's intent.

¹³ Herrick, *Imagining the Sacred Past*, pp. 132–135.

¹⁴ Heffernan, *Sacred Biography* pp. 3–37.

Philological Style and Purpose

The style and purpose of a hagiographical text can offer insight into not only the author's intent but also the spiritual needs of Christian communities. In her study of representations of female saints in hagiography portrayed by male authors, Gail Ashton suggests that 'the intention of the hagiographical text is to confirm the sanctity of its subject, to render visible the saint, 'relic' of a wider Christian community'.¹⁵ Heffernan suggests that Gregory of Tours (538–594) and his contemporaries, were primarily concerned with the subject matter of the text, the delineation of the acts in a saint's life.¹⁶ The paramount purpose of the hagiographical text was to be compelling to the audience with regard to exemplifying such actions, rather than employing the use of rhetorical ornament favoured by earlier classical philosophers. Thus, the saints' lives provided an evangelical tool for the Christian missionary cause, arguably simplifying the lives in order for the texts to be more clearly understood by their recipients, who would to a great extent be illiterate. However, during the sixth century the audience may well have been well versed and experienced in the art of rhetoric with regard to bartering for goods or meetings with village elders as a community. Perhaps it is remiss to assume the audience to be ignorant of any experience or knowledge of rhetorical devices and their purpose. A cynical observer could argue that the adoption of this style was a way to avoid critical verbal response from the audience.

Together with this apparent stripping away of opportunity for discourse or debate came the emphasis, or possible exaggeration, of the deeds depicted in order to engender greater effect upon the recipient. However, the purpose of this style was to clarify, or indeed purify, the lives in order to imbue the text itself with spiritual quality, thereby reflecting these qualities upon the audience. The actions depicted in Gregory's the *Liber Vitae Patrum* [Lives of the Fathers], and contemporaneous texts, were intended to mirror Christ's actions.¹⁷ Thereby, providing a *speculum* for the faithful; a portal to the Divine, the saint's deeds being a conduit between the audience and heaven (divine grace). Thus, inspiring the recipient, through divine grace, to desire to mirror the saint's life in their own. Such motivation would, thereby, create a similar, single-minded community of faith.

¹⁵ Gail Ashton, *The Generation of Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography*, Routledge Research in Medieval Studies, 1 (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 7–9.

¹⁶ Heffernan, *Sacred Biography* pp. 3–37.

¹⁷ Heffernan, *Sacred Biography* pp. 3–37.

In the accounts of Saint Aldhelm's life explored in this thesis there can be seen evidence of his personality trait of holiness, which can be an exemplar to the reader to strive for such holiness in their own life. Cazelles confirms this theory as she offers that hagiographical evidence of sainthood can be described as having dual roles, both as an account of the saint's life, revealing confirmation of their sanctity, and as a *speculum* through which the reader, or the read to, can endeavour to reflect the saint's spiritual and exemplary qualities in his or her own lives.¹⁸ It is also argued that hagiographical accounts reflect, in a more subtle way, the politics and social attitudes of the times in which they were written. Moreover, as most lives in the medieval period were written in monasteries, the particular philosophy of that Order may well be evident in its hagiographical style.

Heffernan states that 'The actions of saints written in *vitae* constitute significantly powerful allegory which in its profundity diminishes doubt, thus dismissing the occasion for argument or criticism'.¹⁹ Thus, evidence of a saint's holiness in his or her spiritual acts portrayed in the texts are so profoundly convincing in style, that the intention to capture their audience is indeed persuasive. This perceived sacred clarity, evident in the written word, is then reflected in the religious lives and rituals of the Christian followers. In so doing, the further intent of the author is to inculcate a collective community spirit, satisfying the societal fundamental need of solidarity of purpose. This was further facilitated, as Cazelles claims, as the early hagiographies, which were written in Latin, had their linguistic detachment offset by their subsequent translations into the vernacular, thus, bringing the written saint within reach of the commoner.²⁰

According to André Vauchez, the twelfth century, however, saw an emphasis on education and cultural literacy with the development of monastic centres of learning and cathedral schools.²¹ The literature produced during this period was entirely Latin, thereby, excluding the lay person, the majority of whom used only the vernacular except when attending Mass, from knowledge and learning in the scholarly sense. Vauchez adds that this attitude of ostracising the laity would inevitably be reflected in the hagiography produced at that time by

¹⁸ Cazelles, 'Introduction' pp. 1–17.

¹⁹ Heffernan, *Sacred Biography* pp. 3–37.

²⁰ Cazelles, 'Introduction' pp. 1–17.

²¹ Vauchez, 'Lay People's Sanctity in Western Europe' pp. 21–33.

the clergy. Aldhelm's education and literary profusion had been highlighted in the first written account of his life by Bede in the eighth century, then, after a lack of any writing of his life, he later appears in two accounts in the twelfth century by Faricius of Abingdon and William of Malmesbury which promote Aldhelm's achievements in the literary and educational field, all three accounts are in Latin, thus attesting to Vauchez's claim. However, later fifteenth century accounts, in Middle English, do not neglect Aldhelm's learned skills. This phenomenon will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

The European Tradition and Geographical Context

Aldhelm's legend is situated in Malmesbury in the south of England, well within reach, and influence, of the seat of insular Christianity in the Archbishop of Canterbury. Moreover, the pilgrimage route from Canterbury to Rome, the crossing at Dover being close at hand to Aldhelm, would offer ideal opportunity, and indeed spiritual sustenance, to follow the path of his own holiness on pilgrimage to Rome. This geographical connection has significant effect upon the nature of Aldhelm's holiness, which is evident in the texts explored later in this thesis.

Gregory of Tours was not only a significant authority and founding father in the European hagiographical tradition, but also an inspired and abundant writer of the early medieval period.²² The foremost work being the *Liber Vitae Patrum* [Lives of the Fathers] (c 591) accounting the lives of twenty Gallic saints, eighteen of whom are of familial or have local connections. Gregory of Tours came from Gallo-Roman heritage whose education was dependent on the study of scripture. Quoting the preface to the *Liber Vitae Patrum*, Heffernan emphasises the intention of the writer is that the lives of the saints put to pen will be for the audience, be they the faithful or faithless, reinvigorating and inspiring by the evangelical spirit emitting from the page.

The cult of saints spread throughout Europe with geographical location affecting the nuances of the adopted cult. As Cazelles states, in the European south west the commoner was the most popular role for sanctity, whereas, in northern regions the traditional heroic

²² Heffernan, *Sacred Biography* pp. 3–37.

role, such as clergy or nobility, was standard, remaining so until the Reformation.²³ Therefore, the changing attitude towards saintly characteristics is seen to evolve during the Middle Ages. Cazelles compares this to the current identity of a saint as emphasising selflessness and altruism more in common with south western Europe's definition rather than the northern heroic model. Reflectively geographical hagiographical accounts demonstrate such diversity.

King, Ecclesiastic or Lay

Whilst he was not a king, or in line to become one, Aldhelm did come from the royal stock of Wessex. His promotion to bishop in his later life may well have had a modicum of influence from his noble birth, nevertheless his connections with Canterbury and Rome would prove to be more dominant. As will be seen later, Aldhelm's pursuit of holiness appears to have been single-minded, yet, his royal lineage was also of spiritual significance to him.

Cazelles indicates that the medieval period saw a synonymous relationship between social rank and spiritual distinction, claiming that until the late 1100s, saints were invariably ecclesiastic or of superior rank in society, evident in both the Latin and vernacular accounts.²⁴ Cazelles clarifies that from the twelfth century these categories were further extended to that of the commoner or lay person. This expansion of the definition of holiness reflected the ecclesiastical reordering of social dimensions. Nevertheless, evidence of miracles was still a precondition for sainthood be the candidate lay, clerical, or from the nobility.

Between the tenth and early eleventh centuries, during a time of relative peace in Europe, an appreciation and celebration of marital life was viewed as complimentary to that of the monastic life. This occurred at a time when feudalism was on the wane in such areas as Belgium and central and northern Italy. Whereas, in the late eleventh century a clear lack of sanctified laity was evident. This was due to the Gregorian reformation which saw a return to monastic principles, plus it being a time of conflict causing a return to more austere moralities. Vauchez indicates that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries lay canonisation was

²³ Cazelles, 'Introduction', pp. 1–17.

²⁴ Cazelles, 'Introduction', pp. 1–17. For further evidence see Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head, eds., *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1995), pp. xiii–xliv. Also, André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 13–21.

the reserve of monarchy. However, the thirteenth century saw a return to favouring laity as candidates for sainthood, monastic life no longer being a prerequisite for sanctity.

As Vauchez indicates, from the ninth to the fourteenth century those who became canonised fluctuated from clergy to nobility, to laity; an almost cyclical response to the social, ecclesiastic, and political climate of the time.²⁵ During this period medieval Europe had to contend with plague, crusades, and the political machinations between the Pope, who held sway in Rome and central Italy, and the Hofs of Germany, Northern Italy and Sicily.

It is added that the laity either played a vital role in the Catholic Church or were a problem to be dismissed depending on the situation at that time. As an example, Vauchez points to Pope Boniface VIII (1235–1303) who viewed the laity as hostile to the priesthood, avaricious, and critical, thereby, being a hindrance to the spread of the faith.²⁶ However, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw a reversal in the fortunes of the opportunity for lay saints. During the Carolingian and Ottonian age, from the ninth to the twelfth century, saints' lives were being written by the clergy that were deemed more relevant and accessible to the laity. The examples given are those of Odo of Cluny, who wrote *The Life of Saint Gerard of Aurillac* around 930, and that of Saint Mathilda, emperor Otto I of Saxony's mother, written around the beginning of the eleventh century by an unknown author.

These written accounts emphasise the exemplary lives of the saints, the emphasis being on virtue and model Christian living and greatly minimising the focus on piety and miracles. In the case of Saint Mathilda, the conjugal life and the qualities therein pertaining to a wife and mother, far outweigh the, until then, traditional view of sainthood. Perhaps this trend tended to portray the saint as a model of the social ideal rather than an exceptionally spiritual and holy person.

Both Vauchez and Heffernan offer evidence of noble and saintly queens in the examples of Saint Margaret of Scotland († 1093) and Saint Elizabeth of Hungary († 1231). Saint Margaret is exemplified for her saintly qualities of devoted wife and mother, and of her dedication to the Church; Elizabeth was identified by her rejection of court life, the establishment

²⁵ Vauchez, 'Lay People's Sanctity in Western Europe', pp. 21–33.

²⁶ Vauchez, 'Lay People's Sanctity in Western Europe', pp. 21–33.

of a hospital and her personal dedication and care that she herself administered to the patients. However, the middle of the thirteenth century saw these qualities as insufficient for sainthood, instead the requirements were that of reflecting the humility of Christ's life.

The Role of the Past and Memory in English Hagiography

The role of the past and memory played an important role in later hagiographical constructs of the life of Aldhelm. Placing Aldhelm in his seventh century context has him emerging from the past as he himself is part of it. The choice emphasis on holy events in his life, such as his personality trait, pilgrimage to Rome, and miracles would have relied on both memory but also nostalgic notions of the past.

A number of scholars have focused on the role of the past in English hagiography, and the significance of memory in continuity as themes in their studies, this has direct relevance to European influence. Clare A. Lees comments that, whilst the late Anglo-Saxon religious texts such as homilies and saints' lives adhere to the conventions laid down by their Latin forebears, by historical definition possessing spiritual and authoritative qualities, they are nevertheless written in vernacular English. The texts are produced directly for the English audience, not as a generic Christian text, as was the case in the Latin versions, creating a relevance via the vernacular to local audiences.²⁷ Similar tendencies were also evident in continental Europe, in such cases as *Langue d'Oc* and Catalan.

Matthew Innes indicates that during the early medieval period in England the past was a vital and potent element of the present society. The individual looked to the past as an aspirational model; an idealised existence which provided a guiding light deemed worthy of emulation.²⁸ Innes further adds that the collective consciousness of such faith, which was influenced by the past, forged a sense of belonging to the community. As a result of the fundamental influence of the past, as a topic of continuous refinement and reform, the past became directly reflected in the present consciousness. The success or failure of society's

²⁷Clare A. Lees, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, Medieval Cultures, 19 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 19.

²⁸Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, eds., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1–8.

practices echoed those of the past, with the responsibility of memory being heavily borne by hagiography and cult veneration.

Dominic Janes points to the past as being present in allegorical texts referring to the preface of Bede's the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* [Ecclesiastical History of the English People], written in 731. Highlighting Bede's exegetic qualities, Janes notes his recommending that the reading of good deeds inspires the audience to then imitate these aspirational virtues in their own lives. Thus, imitation, inspired by allegory, creates living memory.²⁹ Janes suggests that Bede continued the tradition of allegory that he found when reading the Bible by echoing this style in his own writing, in that the Divine was present within such allegorical traditions. Thus, with hagiography grounded in such as the conviction of purpose as Bede, over the following centuries most believers would have received the book as if it were speaking to their soul. In that, rather than the audience receiving the book as a perhaps a mundane literal account of a saint's life, instead the script is imbued with supernatural qualities that offer solace, inspiration and instruction to the faithful.

As previously discussed, oral tradition of lives of saints found its legitimacy in the written word. Catherine Cubitt emphasises the significance of memory in the narratives of the Anglo-Saxon hagiography in the eighth and ninth century highlighting the paucity of written accounts of lives of saints in the era between Bede and the Norman Conquest.³⁰ Cubitt focuses upon insular saints whose cults developed within a hundred years of their deaths, and the relationship between the hagiographical conventions in which they were recorded. In the case of Saint Cuthbert's two anonymous prose lives, Cubitt raises the profile of shared memory within the text by highlighting the shift from Celtic sanctity, which had been flourishing in northern Britain, to the promotion of the Christian ideal from Rome, in particular with reference to the schism regarding the date of Easter, which was vehemently

²⁹ Dominic Janes, 'The World and its Past as Christian Allegory in the Early Middle Ages', in Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, eds., *The Uses of the past in the Early Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 102–113. See also J.M. Wallace-Hadrill *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 2–6.

³⁰ Catherine Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of Early Anglo-Saxon Saints', in Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, eds., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 29–66. The four case studies are regarding the lives of Saint Boniface, two prose lives of Saint Cuthbert on Lindisfarne one anonymous plus Bede's translation, and Saint Guthlac, the hermit of Crowland, by Felix.

disputed at the Synod of Whitby in 664 A.D., during which the Roman ideal was formalised for Britain. Thus, the relationship between memory, writing and political change are inextricably linked, the text itself being responsible for creating memory.

Cubitt speculates regarding ideals of sainthood for the Anglo-Saxon community, as reliant on wisdom or monastic goodness. Regarding the monastic role in the cults of saints, in their descriptions of the early Anglo-Saxon saint, the monks Aethelwulf and Bede encourage the community to imitate the life of a saint, and by doing so they nurture the seeds of remembrance.³¹ Rather than being echoes of memory, the Anglo-Saxon monasteries actively brought to life the holy essence of the saint by reflecting those sanctifying qualities in their own actions. Aldhelm's own monastery of Malmesbury, which became a sight of pilgrimage, not least to see relics of his in the form of a miraculously gifted chasuble and Bible, would have evoked such spiritual memory. However, it is cautioned that memory would have been different for differing groups in society. The monastic world view was composed of a set of values and structures which were in contrast, to a certain extent, to that of the laity whose reasons for cohesion in their community were kinship and family ties.

Sanok considers that the use of allegory and memory are evident in the late medieval period in the lives of female saints in the conspicuous form of exemplarity.³² This device speaks directly to the female reader engendering an idealised example of female spiritual living. In particular, Sanok points to the narrative of legends written in the vernacular in late medieval England which illustrate the creation of a specifically defined female audience, whether actual or imagined by the author. This phenomenon is reflected in the emergence of women's interest in, and contribution to, hagiographical literature. Such participation is evident in patronage and commissions of the works of sanctified lives.³³ However, patronage as declared by the author in the preface of a text of a female saint may also have been a spurious claim, perhaps intended to woo a female audience. For example, A consequence of

³¹ Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative', pp. 29–66.

³² Catherine Sanok, *Her Life Historical: Exemplarity and Female Saints' Lives in Late Medieval England*, The Middle Ages Series, 271 (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. x. See also, Catherine Sanok, *New Legends of England: Forms of Community in Late Medieval Saints' Lives*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). See also, Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

³³ Sanok, *Her Life Historical*, p. x.

this is a conscious, or subconscious, manipulation of a saint's life as an instrument for past reflection and present reform, which is to be tested in relation to Aldhelm.

Sanok suggests that the vernacular texts cause the reader to have personal considerations regarding spiritual exemplar and gender perception. Thus, outward religious practices, the reading of the saints' lives, in turn influenced inward personal considerations. Moreover, it is posited that the virgin body is invariably a 'formulaic plot' within female hagiography. The virgin body is seen as a spiritual manifestation that is visibly present in its other-worldly response to violence. Indeed, despite its mutilation, in the case of female martyrs whose lives reflect the integrity of the virgin form by refusing to denounce Christianity by emanating a spiritual completeness.³⁴ However, this is a different angle on holiness involving violence is not seen in legends of Aldhelm.

The concern is that such exemplary narratives of early Christian female martyrs could cause a historical separation between the sacred ideal portrayed in the text and the actual religious *imitatio* in the late medieval present, perhaps an unobtainable, or undesirable goal. Equally, Sanok indicates that rather than exemplarity preserving its role and value in society over time, the devotional adherences of past saints are not reflected in those of later periods.³⁵ Secular influences of day to day living having the power to obfuscate the past. The imagined audiences of hagiographical texts were placed into one of two categories: either those who adhered to the practices of devotion from the past, or those who were estranged from the exemplars of traditional spiritual practice.

As an example, Sanok points to the legends of Saint Cecilia, Saint Katherine of Alexandria, and Saint Barbara, suggesting that their hagiographical construct declares their virginity as an embodiment, both literally and figuratively, of their faith, thereby, outwardly denouncing the masculine right to dominate.³⁶ Saint Cecilia's vehement defence of her virginity, her survival of martyrdom, and her subsequent evangelising, so eagerly portrayed in her life, does not reflect the lives of the late medieval English female audience. By this time virginity was not viewed as a pre-requisite for preaching, moreover, hostility to Christianity was not as prevalent as it had been in third-century Rome.³⁷ Late medieval communities required women to adhere to religious and moral norms which did not extol

³⁴ Sanok, *Her Life Historical*, p. x.

³⁵ Sanok, *Her Life Historical*, pp. 39 and 51.

³⁶ Sanok, *Her Life Historical*, pp. 39 and 51.

heroism. However, the popularity of these lives appears to denounce this dichotomy, perhaps a yearning for the past was manifest here too in the minds of the female reader. Yet female preaching was decried in misogynist texts.

Regarding late medieval illustrations of virgin martyrs, Salih indicates that they are depicted as the fashion icons of the day, decorous and elegantly adorned, rather than images reflecting defiant humility in their suffering.³⁸ Sanok points out that such images are evident in Osbern Bokenham and John Lydgate's early fifteenth-century hagiographical accounts of virgin martyrs, yet the narrative continues to adhere to the earlier depiction of the lives of these saints. Bokenham reveals a recognition of association between the female saint depicted in his the *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* (1443–1447) and his female audience. Bokenham records in detail the commissioning of a saints' life, both by whom and how this occurred. For example, the sister of Richard of York, Isabel Bouchier countess of Essex, commissioned Bokenham to write a life of Mary Magdalene. This record also offers the social context of their meeting, at a Twelfth-Night celebration in 1445 which involved the mutual conversation discussing work already commissioned and by whom, the patron's devotional interest particularly those women from East Anglia, for example Elizabeth Vere Countess of Oxford, who had commissioned the life of Elizabeth of Hungary, perhaps her namesake was a significant reason for this, however, it must be noted there were also other options of more notable sanctity, such as Elizabeth, cousin of Mary and mother to John the Baptist.³⁹ As Elizabeth of Hungary was a Franciscan saint this may have been an interest of the countess; biblical Elizabeth being less important than a noble, queenly saint.

With reference to late medieval texts of virgin martyrs, Karen A. Winstead demonstrates that such literature was updated in line with developing social tastes.⁴⁰ Winstead explores two fifteenth-century versions of the life of the fourth-century martyr Saint Katherine of Alexandria. The first is an anonymous account and the second is Capgrave's version written over twenty years later.⁴¹ Whilst painting a similar portrayal of

³⁸ Sarah Salih, ed., *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 1–23.

³⁹ Sanok, *Her Life Historical*, pp. 39 and 51.

⁴⁰ Karen A. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 147–180.

⁴¹ Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, pp. 156–177.

Katherine regarding social, political and home life recognizable by fifteenth-century readership, both texts emphasise her studying, yet the message to the audience differs in this respect. Winstead points out that the anonymous *Lyf* offers Katherine as an ideal exemplar of the pious reader, whereas, Capgrave appears to use Katherine's reading as a device to highlight 'the social and political ramifications of Katherine's scholarship, at once encouraging lay learning and warning of its dangers'.⁴²

most believers would have received the book as if it were speaking to their soul. In that, rather than the audience receiving the book as a perhaps a mundane literal account of a saint's life, instead the script is imbued with supernatural qualities that offer solace, inspiration and instruction to the faithful.

Themes Related to the European Tradition of Hagiographical Legends

Beresford acknowledges the draw of dream and vision narratives as intriguing, if not beguiling, areas of study: '[...] the departure from reality establishes a sense of wonder and awe that merits detailed inspection'.⁴³ In the case of Saint Gervasius and Protasius, Beresford describes their collective lives in the *Gran flos sanctorum* as being awash with examples of vision and dream narrative which is markedly richer and more profound in its account than that within the leaves of the *Legenda aurea*. It consists of the central figure of Saint Ambrose who, via a sequence of three visions was compelled to find the bones of the long-dead Gervasius and Protasius. Beresford points out that a common oneiric theme is evident in that this occurrence happened at Easter which is in clear reference to death and resurrection.⁴⁴ As later will be seen, whilst Saint Aldhelm is not purported to have had visions or dreams himself, his chasuble miracle, where he hung his vestment on a sunbeam shining into the Church of Saint John Lateran in Rome, clearly indicates a supernatural vision for others to behold. Moreover, this miracle occurred as Aldhelm finished saying holy Mass, which could well have been at Easter.

⁴² Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, p. 156.

⁴³ Beresford, 'Dreams of Death', pp. 159–184.

⁴⁴ Beresford, 'Dreams of Death', pp. 159–184.

In Emma Gatland's work regarding medieval Castilian *vitae, santorales*, the focus is upon women saints in the *Golden Legend*.⁴⁵ Part of the study explores vision in the narrative, yet not as an oneiric experience but as the physical action. Described as 'ocular politics' Gatland considers the various power plays in the relationship between the female saint and those around them. This is both as the way the saint is visualised by others, and the powerful effect of 'the look', as in forcing others to turn away due to the authority in the gaze of the saint. Such actions are considered in terms of the relationship between vision and space, vision and power and vision and desire. In relation to Aldhelm, the performance of his miracles in front of an audience involves visual interaction between saint and witness.

In the study of the fourteenth-century hagiographical manuscript Escorial h-i-13 Heather Downey examines the life of the holy empress, the *Santa Enperatris*, Saint Helena of Constantinople.⁴⁶ The significant event within the account is that of a vision of the Virgin Mary. Whilst the narrative regarding this profound visual experience is fundamental to the ultimate sanctity of the recipient, Downey illustrates that the scent of a rose and lily, which Mary is holding, act both as a precursor to the vision as well as continuing to linger afterwards. Moreover, in her subsequent sanctified life, caring for the sick and infirm, the scent continues to accompany her acting as sign to others of her sanctity.

Whilst examining language and performativity within the *santorale*, Gatland's central focus is that of authority in narratives of women saints.⁴⁷ The balance of control in the narrative is also argued to be affected by the predominant accounts which were written by men. Thereby, begging the question whose authority is evident? Is authority evident in the account itself, or in the style of narrative predetermined by the author's gender predisposition to dominance, that of the male writer? This is supported by John Kitchen who considers the 'Rhetoric of Gender' in the Merovingian era of hagiography.⁴⁸

Gatland further suggests that the redactors of the more restrained text may have been driven by a desire to have the text more user-friendly and easier to access and understand the

⁴⁵ Emma, Gatland, *Women from the Golden Legend: Female Authority in a Medieval Castilian Sanctoral*. Serie A: Monografias, 296 (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2011) pp. 3–20.

⁴⁶ Heather L. Downey, 'Scent of the Vision: Odoriferous Rewards in *Fermoso Cuento de una Santa Enperatris que ovo en Roma & de su castidad*', *La coronica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures*, 42. 1 (2013): 259–280.

⁴⁷ Gatland, *Women from the Golden Legend*, pp. 3–20.

⁴⁸ John Kitchen, *Saints' Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender: Male and Female in Merovingian Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 154–160.

narrative for the reader, thereby maintaining interest, rather than a dense text which may be discouraging.⁴⁹ This applies to the three texts studied in this thesis, as the style and content differ to a certain extent in some areas, and markedly in others. Such limited codices would have been composed for the intention of reading to a gathering of laity rather than for the individual reading of nuns and monks. Furthermore, during the era of Voragine's *Legenda aurea* literary style had moved on from the typically classical dominance of rhetoric to that of somewhat poetic licence, or in this case prose licence, where the author was not solely recording an account inspired and dominated by Divine will, it had become guided by grace with the writer's choice of philological tools at his disposal his own free choice to utilise. This, in turn, follows hand in hand with translation. As is suggested, whereas Latin represents continuity, vernacular translations opened a tantalising portal to allow individual redactor's style to enter in, as well as being influenced by local norms and desires.

Conclusion

In conclusion, hagiographical themes relating to holiness which can be applied to the life of Aldhelm in the three fifteenth century texts have been explored. Emulation, or an attempt at interpretation of the nature of holiness, appears to pervade the essence of themes examined in accounts of lives of saints. From the early sixth-century texts of such as Gregory of Tours to the later medieval European lives of saints variation from *specula* of martyrs to *exempla* of confessors have nourished the souls of the faithful. The relevance of the themes discussed to the life of Aldhelm, emerge to be the subtle, and not so subtle changes in narrative in both content and style, of saints' lives over time. The influence of memory and the past seems to cast a veil over the life of a saint creating a perceived definition of holiness which is dependent on both the text and the reader's perception, such a clouding of faith can alter the spiritual relationship between text and reader. Offered as an exemplar, a life may become far out of reach for the lay person, martyrdom, for example, which is too much for the reader to attempt to emulate, causing them to possibly lose their personal quest for holiness. However, as Aldhelm's life and death as a saint does not involve martyrdom or violence his life studied herein does not prove to be disheartening from the perspective of holiness.

⁴⁹ Gatland, *Women from the Golden Legend*, pp. 3–20.

The following chapters will consider the theme of the nature of holiness specific to the life of Saint Aldhelm held within the three original sources of the saint's life, followed by a comparison of transcriptions of the life of Saint Aldhelm in three fifteenth century Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*. A comparison of the original sources and the three fifteenth-century texts are in order to identify and analyse their claims to Aldhelm's holiness. In particular to establish which elements deem his sanctity to be worthy to be immortalised in English versions of the *Legenda aurea*.

Chapter Five

Comparison of the Three Original Sources of the Life of Saint Aldhelm

Introduction

The life of Saint Aldhelm first appears in Bede's the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* [the Ecclesiastical History of the English People] in 731AD, a mere twenty-two years after Aldhelm's death.¹ Aldhelm next appears four-hundred years later in Faricius of Abingdon's († 1117) (henceforth Faricius) Latin prose version the *Vita S. Aldhelmi* [The Life of Saint Aldhelm].² Faricius's version was soon followed by an account penned by William of Malmesbury (1095–1143) (henceforth William) in his *De gesta pontificum anglorum*, [The Deeds of the Bishops of England], completed in 1125.³ As these texts are available in editions already it is deemed unnecessary to include the original versions in appendix. The content of the texts, however, will be studied and compared in detail within this chapter.

Bede's brief prose account focuses primarily upon Aldhelm's literary accomplishment, and his role in the bishopric of the West Saxons. There is no mention of miracles performed by Aldhelm. Aldhelm then appears to have become an obscure saint, in literary form, for the following four hundred years. The possible reason for this neglect can be gleaned from the final comment in Bede's account where it is stated that after Aldhelm's death, followed by subsequent Bishops of the Southern Saxons taking over his office, '[...] the bishopric has fallen into abeyance to this day.'⁴ Most significantly, an account of Aldhelm's life is noticeable by its absence in Aelfric's (955–1010) the *Lives of Saints*.⁵ Aelfric's collection of

¹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Trans. Leo Shirley-Price, revised by R.E. Latham, (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 298–299.

² J.A. Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, pp. 356–382. See also M. Winterbottom, 'An Edition of Faricius, *Vita S. Aldhelmi*', *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 15 (2005), 93–147.

³ Preest, *Gesta* pp. 223–265.

⁴ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 299.

⁵ Walter W. Skeat, *Aelfric's Lives of Saints*, pp. 3–5.

homilies of the lives of saints contains twenty eight lives, principally biblical and Desert Fathers, and only five English lives: Saint Oswald (604–602), King and martyr, Saint Edmund (841–869), King and martyr, Saint Aethelfryth (636–679), virgin, Saint Swythun († 862), bishop (famed for his connection with the weather), and Saint Alban († 305) martyr.

One could speculate that Aelfric's choice of English saint could have relied upon the popularity of particular saints at the time with his congregations, in particular as his collection is taken from his homilies. It is possible that Aldhelm was not included due to his having, according to Bede, vanished into abandonment. It could also be ventured that Aelfric's selection appears to rely heavily on royalty, as in the cases of Oswald, Edmund, and Aethelfryth, who had been a princess then later abbess. His further focus appears to be martyrdom, as with Oswald, Edmund and Alban, which was not the case with Aldhelm. Aelfric has two saints of ecclesiastic office, Aethelfryth and Swythun, yet Aldhelm, despite having held the office of Bishop, is not included, nor does it seem his royal lineage merits him worthy of inclusion. As William states in his prologue to the life of Aldhelm: 'Indeed, apart from Bede's mention of him in the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Aldhelm has always remained unhonoured, buried in undeserved obscurity thanks to the sloth of his countrymen'.⁶

William gives Faricius's account recognition but claims that he 'relied on his own knowledge, and made no additional use of any external sources to confirm his words'.⁷ William continues by stating his own strategy for writing a life of Aldhelm is to focus on events missing from Faricius. Further adding that he in no way intends to belittle Faricius's attempt, yet adds that a major handicap would have been his limited knowledge of English, as he originally came from Tuscany.

Faricius's lengthy the *Vita S. Aldhelmi* [The Life of Saint Aldhelm] written in Latin prose, offers a florid description of events and attitudes.⁸ The focus is upon Aldhelm's virtues, often reflected in examples of holy men from the Old Testament. Thereby, indicating that Aldhelm is fulfilling the intentions of these saints regarding a virtuous life leading to salvation. Faricius further emphasises a number of miracles performed by Aldhelm, both during his lifetime and after at his shrine. The text is divided into 5 chapters: CAP I Familia,

⁶ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 223.

⁷ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 223.

⁸ J.A. Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 356–382. See also M. Winterbottom, 'An Edition of Faricius, *Vita S. Aldhelmi*', *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 15 (2005), 93–147.

regia, studia, monachaius, et abbatis munus. CAP II Acta Romeo, Libri ab Aldelmo Scripti. CAP III Miracula Patrata, Episcopatus, obitus, sepultura. CAP IV Corpus S Aldhelmi evevatum et a S Dunstano in turmulo lapideo collocatum. Persecutio Danica, Miracula Facta. CAP V Energumenus, contractus, et coecus sanati. Revelatio corporis.⁹

A mere eight years after the death of Faricius, the *Vita S. Aldhelmi* [The Life of Saint Aldhelm] is followed by William's version as *De gesta pontificum anglorum* [The Deeds of the Bishops of England]. William's content closely resembles that of Faricius, and is of considerable length. Yet, William differs in his focus regarding emphasis on virtue and reference to Old Testament figures, as these are not present. However, Aldhelm's holiness is highlighted to a certain degree, as well as accounts of miracles. As opposed to Faricius's elaborate, eulogising style, William's attitude appears to be more that of a publicist championing his patron saint in fervent, dogmatic terms. As with Bede, William's focus is also upon Aldhelm's role as Abbot and Bishop. This is to be expected as *De gesta pontificum anglorum* is an account of the deeds of the bishops of England. William tells us he travelled the length and breadth of England to gather information, and emphatically declares his writing to be based on evidence rather than hearsay.¹⁰

As identified in the previous chapter, themes that reveal the nature of Aldhelm's holiness can be unearthed in the subtle nuances of the texts in content and style. The emphasis on a saint's holiness morphed over time, from nostalgic memory of the past to evocative accounts of events in their lives. For the reader the threshold of holiness was a constant striving to emulate the saint's life reflected in his or her own. However, such emulation existent in the Latin accounts caused them to be somewhat unattainable. Yet, translation into the vernacular seems to have made this reflection of the Divine in saints' lives become somewhat clearer. From the influence of a saint's royal lineage and ecclesiastical connections, to that of access to, and taking advantage of, the geographical location being on the pilgrimage route to Rome creates a compelling narrative.

⁹ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 93–147. Faricius's chapter titles begin with Aldhelm's early life, royal lineage, education and rise through ecclesiastical dedication rising to Abbot, then follows chapter 2 with the saint's events in Rome and his literary output. Chapter 3 relates to Aldhelm's miracle performed during his life, his rise to Bishop and death. Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to miracles that occurred at Aldhelm's shrine.

¹⁰ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 223.

Comparison of Key Events Identified as Relevant to the Nature of Aldhelm's Holiness

In order to compare the content of the three original sources, the following identifies key events relevant to the nature of Aldhelm's holiness as they appear in Bede, Faricius and William of Malmesbury. For purpose of clarity, the comparison will be divided into 16 sections, each addressing the identified key events.¹¹ In light of findings pertaining to the identified sections in Chapter Four, Chapter Five will then follow with a similar comparison of the life of Saint Aldhelm in the three fifteenth-century manuscripts: the Abbotsford House *Legenda Aurea*, the MS 72 Lambeth Palace *Gilte Legende* and Caxton's the *Golden Legende*.

Royal Blood

There is no mention of Aldhelm's royal lineage in Bede's specific account regarding his life, nor his youth, Bede's principal focus regarding Aldhelm was his writing and ecclesiastical position. Bede first mentions Aldhelm as being Abbot at 'Maelduib' (Malmesbury).¹² Maelduib was the Irish founder monk of Malmesbury. Faricius, on the other hand, begins with Aldhelm's royal lineage stating that he was of the line of King Ine, who was brother to Kenten. Moreover, Faricius states that Ine was a devout and virtuous Christian.¹³ William states that the *Handbook of King Alfred* clearly confirms that Kenten was Aldhelm's father, and instead of being the brother to the king Kenten was his first cousin. David Preest notes that no extant copies of the *Handbook of King Alfred* are in existence.¹⁴ Unlike William, Faricius further adds that Kenten was an accomplished translator of the English language evidenced in his verbalised reading. Perhaps this was a nod to Faricius' own ability in that field, an attribute which is later disputed by William.

¹¹ See appendix A for comparison table.

¹² Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 298.

¹³ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 356.

¹⁴ Preest, *Gesta*, p. 225.

‘Istius nomen Primatis multum eximium, secundo loco fratrem fuisse Kenten, virum, probum, sanctitate lautum, honestate magnificum, antiquissimis Anglianae linguae schedulis saepius ex interprete legend audivimus’.¹⁵

[His true, the name of the Primate gives a lot of outstanding manifestation of God, and secondly to have been Kenten his brother, a man of excellent character, holiness, is elegant in goodness of the magnificent man in another, in the most ancient of the interpreter of the English language, by reading the ballads of the more often we have heard.]

Faricius then offers his first reference to virtues, addressing the dichotomy of human desire and chastened love. He justifies the carnal union of man and wife, between Aldhelm’s parents, by referring the advice given by Saint Paul, and exemplified by Samuel and Anna, for the purpose of reproduction engendered by love. This is also Faricius’s first reference to exemplars from the Bible:

‘Qui Apostoli praecepta Pauli adimplere studens, virtute non modica Deum pra omnibus metuens, in uxoris castae vivebat copula. Is equidem non idcirco uxoris intrabat cubiculum, quo carnis, ut moris est quorundam, exercere cuperet disideruim; sed ut, quemadmodum Samuelem Anna, talem generaret filium qui, ut scriptura docet, tota anima virtute diligeret Dominum’.¹⁶

[He who is seeking to fulfil the precepts of the Apostle Paul, with great virtue fearing God above everything. He thus did not enter the chamber of his wife, as is the custom in order to exercise the will of the flesh; but just as Anna begot her son Samuel that he might love God with all his soul in virtue.]

Youth

There is no mention of Aldhelm’s youth in Bede. Faricius comments on Aldhelm’s mental prowess being that of a mature man, despite his youth, adding that his educators were in wonder at his maturity of mind.¹⁷ This sentiment is echoed in the Abbotsford House *Legenda Aurea*, as will be discussed later. It states that Aldhelm surpassed his masters but did not

¹⁵ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 356.

¹⁶ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 356.

¹⁷ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 357.

suffer from pride, here virtue is mentioned as in Faricius. Bede does refer to Aldhelm as being learned and well read, but not with specific reference to his youth: 'For he was a man of wide learning, and polished style and, as I have said, extremely well read both in biblical and general literature'.¹⁸

Faricius then quotes Psalm 80:11, emphasising that Aldhelm's astute ability is both from and, for God. 'Aperi os tuum et ego adimplebo illud dogmate meo'.¹⁹ The King James Version of the Bible states the Psalm to be 'She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river'.²⁰ William, in a more practical tone, advises that Aldhelm excelled in both Latin and Greek to the marvel of his tutors.²¹ Both Faricius and William refer to Aldhelm's musical ability, with William also commending Aldhelm's poetry. Such attributes are not present in the Abbotsford MS, the MS 72 or the Caxton incunable.

Sent to a Monastery

Faricius and William attest to Aldhelm's entry into monastic life. Bede is the first to refer to the monastery as Malmesbury, but more so that Aldhelm was priest and abbot there rather than his actual entry as a youth. Bede refers to it as 'Maelduib's town'.²² Faricius refers to it as its Latin name Meldunensi: 'Meldunensi ecclesia' [Meldunensi the church].²³

Faricius again extols Aldhelm's virtues during his time as a monk, commenting that his life is a reflection of the lives of the patriarchs of the Old Testament, namely Abraham and Jeremiah. Thus, his holiness is once again brought into focus. Faricius specifically praises Aldhelm's virtues of patience, comparing him to Job, in steadfastness, comparing him to David with Goliath, and in piety to his dear Apostle John. Faricius follows by highlighting the dangers of lust, and how the deeply devoted religious life can protect from such desires, as in the case of Saint Aldhelm. However, no biblical characters are referred to regarding combating this specific vice. It is only in Faricius's account of the life of Saint Aldhelm that

¹⁸ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 299.

¹⁹ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 357.

²⁰ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p. 621.

²¹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, pp. 225–226.

²² Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 298.

²³ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 358.

such comparisons and reflections of specific biblical characters are made in these early documents.²⁴

William of Malmesbury focuses his account of Aldhelm's life in the monastery upon his letters of advice to his students, and his own studies. Here William employs evidence to support his claim that his account of the life of Saint Aldhelm is not based on conjecture, as opposed to that of Faricius which William claims is not built on evidence.²⁵ For example, in William's inclusion of Aldhelm's letter in support of Wilfrid it is drawn out that this is an example of '[...] utter integrity towards his friend'.²⁶ In William's inclusion of Aldhelm's letter to his pupil Aethilwald, he praises his '[...] excellent advice to a pupil'.²⁷ This letter, in which Aldhelm quotes the Scriptures four times: 2 Corinthians 5:14, Ecclesiastes 11:10, Mark 8:36, and Matthew 16:27, warns of the dangers of impetuous youth. Aldhelm's use of biblical references demonstrate a balance between warnings and love of Christ. For example, in the Ecclesiastes reference the warning is stated as 'Youth and pleasure are vain', while the Corinthians quotation is more tender 'because the love of Christ so constrains me'.²⁸ The later King James Bible states '[...] put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity'.²⁹ Equally, '[...] for the love of Christ constraineth us'.³⁰

The use of biblical references, in Aldhelm's letter specifically, not William's account of Aldhelm's life *per se*, highlights the dangers of vices and to pursue virtues, this focus is also reiterated in Faricius's version, yet Aldhelm's letter is not mentioned specifically. Thereby, strongly suggesting that rather than lacking in linguistic skills, Faricius not only had read Aldhelm's works and letters, but also emulated them in his own account of Aldhelm's life. This indication contradicts William's claim against Faricius's lack of sources. Both William and Faricius freely acknowledge their use of Bede's account of Saint Aldhelm as a primary source: '[...] cujus facit mentionem Beda venerabilis Presbyter in Anglorum Historia

²⁴ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 358.

²⁵ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 223.

²⁶ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, pp. 229–230.

²⁷ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, pp. 230–231.

²⁸ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 231.

²⁹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p. 689.

³⁰ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p. 1150.

ecclesiastica [...].³¹ [Of which Bede the venerable priest makes mention in the English Church History].

As well as giving evidence of Aldhelm's life in the saint's correspondences, William also offers anecdotal commentary. For example, when he refers to Aldhelm as being virtuous William relates how Aldhelm would deprive himself of food, indicating that denying the body concentrates the mind on the soul.³² He very seldom ventured out of the monastery. More markedly, he disciplined his body by spending whole nights shoulder deep in a spring of water, be it summer or winter, while singing the complete psalter.³³ This account is only to be found in William of Malmesbury's *De gesta pontificum anglorum*, not in Bede or Faricius, nor the subsequent fifteenth-century versions the MS 72 and Caxton. Yet, the detail of Aldhelm's abstinence, as related by William, is mentioned in the Abbotsford MS.

Many hagiographical texts are replete with examples of emphasis on abstinence and devotion. For example, in Bede's life of Saint Cuthbert (634 AD–687 AD) it is declared that 'His self-discipline and fasting were exceptional, and through the grace of contrition he was always intent on the things of heaven'.³⁴ Moreover, with specific reference to the act of devotion and self-discipline recounted above regarding standing in water, Hamer and Russell in their *Supplementary Lives in Some Manuscripts of the Gilte Legende*, have Saint Cuthbert carrying out a similar act: 'And every nyght when his brethren were abed he wolde go into the colde water al naked and stonde therein up to the chyn til it were mydnyght [...]' [And every night when his brothers were in bed he would go into the cold water all naked and stand there up to the chin until it was midnight].³⁵ In the case of the life of Saint Dominic, Andrew Beresford and Lesley Twomey highlight self-denial regarding food, sleep and other such flesh-bound temptations, as a means and a need to strive for spiritual awareness.³⁶

³¹ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 359.

³² For further reading on the relevance of food and fasting to saints' lives see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987).

³³ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 243.

³⁴ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 260.

³⁵ Richard Hamer and Vida Russell, eds., *Supplementary Lives in Some Manuscripts of the Gilte Legend*, O.S., 315 (Oxford: Published for The Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 220.

³⁶ Andrew M. Beresford and Lesley K. Twomey, eds., 'Introduction', *Christ, Mary and the Saints: Reading Religious Subjects in Medieval and Renaissance Spain*, The Medieval and Iberian World, 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), p. 17.

As earlier mentioned, both Faricius and William comment on Aldhelm's gift with music. In a further anecdotal account, briefly touched on by Faricius, yet with greater detail in William, Aldhelm uses his musical ability as a subliminal evangelical device. William tells of information from King Alfred's notebook that as well as being astute in other languages Aldhelm was also a master of his own English, in particular poetry. William states that Alfred's notebook has Aldhelm composing cheery songs which people sing still in William's time. The anecdote speaks of an event when Aldhelm was somewhat dismayed that the congregation in church did not pay attention to the priest, and preferred to chat among themselves.

William notes that Alfred's book states that the people at Aldhelm's time were 'semi-barbarian' and not particularly receptive to the Church's message. Aldhelm's remedy for this malaise was to place himself upon a bridge, which the people had to cross, Faricius mentions there was a market nearby, and passed himself off as a 'minstrel'. William tells us this was not a singular occurrence. As crowds gathered around him to listen, he would surreptitiously add words from the Scriptures into his repertoire, thus, both maintaining his flock whilst gathering new members.³⁷ This account is not to be found in Bede.

Yet, this event is neither recounted in the Abbotsford MS, the MS 72 or Caxton. It appears puzzling that it is not included in particular in the Abbotsford MS, as that particular document has its principal focus on Aldhelm's personal qualities and holiness. Perhaps this is because it was not so much an act of holiness but of shrewdness. Was shrewdness considered a virtue at that time? Perhaps so in this instance, yet perhaps not in the fifteenth century. Perhaps an example of a saint with such an attribute could be Saint Nicholas. His shrewd gesture in deflecting a father from selling his daughters into prostitution is arguably his most famous act of piety. Nicholas anonymously left a bag of gold in the window of the father's house each night, in order to prevent such a repugnant act. When the father stood watch one night, he saw that it was Nicholas who had saved him from sin and collapsed on his knees in thanksgiving. Nicholas insisted the man keep his actions secret until after his death, thus, demonstrating his astute piety was a means to an end, the end goal being to evangelise, the route to that evangelisation was pious perspicacity.³⁸

³⁷ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 228.

³⁸ Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 21–27.

Pope, Rome and Privileges

It is stated in certain version of his life that Aldhelm visited Rome. Such an account, or allusion, does not appear in Bede. He moves directly, somewhat swiftly, from Aldhelm's writings, which Bede twice applauds, to his death. Yet, Faricius and William pay great attention to Aldhelm's experiences regarding Rome, including the first account of a miracle performed by Aldhelm, followed by subsequent such occurrences. Thus, indicating that Aldhelm's visit to Rome was a catalyst for his heightened holiness. In his inimitable way, William declares his rationalisation for including miracles passed down orally by stating: 'I shall only include those miracles which have gained universal support from ancient times right down to today'.³⁹ He further rubber stamps his declaration by calling on those who doubt him to equate it to daring to call into question specifically the sacred writings by Saint Luke in his Gospel and Pope Gregory the Great in the *Dialogues*.

William mentions that immediately previous to his visit to Rome, Aldhelm built up the monastery at Malmesbury, adjacent to which was his newly built church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It was at this time, William tells us, that Aldhelm decided to go to Rome. Faricius, on the other hand, claims that the Pope, who he names as Sergius (650–701), Sergius I. '[...] summus Pontifex, magnae sanctitatis vir Sergius' [Sergius the Pope a man of great sanctity] had heard of Aldhelm's holiness, despite the great distance between them, and called for him to visit.⁴⁰ This appears to be both Faricius and William building up the value of their church in England by reference to the kudos of connections with the Pope.

Yet, Faricius excludes any mention of Aldhelm's journey to Rome, whereas William announces an event which was later to produce miracles. Before he ever leaves the shores of England, Aldhelm decided to build a small church as he was waiting for a fair wind to carry him on his voyage. William tells us that four hundred years later, at William's time, the church stands without a roof and no matter what inclement weather surrounds the church, inside remains perfectly dry:

[...] no matter how great the force of a storm which may be raging all around outside, not so much as a drop falls inside the walls of the church. The shepherds tending their

³⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 243.

⁴⁰ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 360.

flocks in the fields nearby are now so accustomed to using it that they do not think it is miraculous.⁴¹

William again provides a disclaimer for the validity of this account due to the numerous eye-witnesses who have experienced this phenomenon. William further adds the locality, stating ‘The place is two miles from the sea in the county of Dorset [...] The castle of Corfe also overlooks the sea at that point’.⁴²

Chasuble Miracle

The miracle of the chasuble is present in both the early sources and the later the *Golden Legend* accounts. As mentioned earlier, Bede does not recount any of the events of Rome. It is noteworthy in that not only is this Aldhelm’s first recorded miracle, but it is also significant regarding the sacred status of the location and the occasion surrounding it. All documents attest to the location as the Church of Saint John Lateran in Rome (see figure 2 for photograph of this church). Aldhelm was saying Mass, in this forth-century building, when he removed his chasuble and it was hung on a sunbeam shining in through a window. Each text refers to this phenomenon, yet they differ slightly in their account. Faricius claims ‘ita firmiter [...] solis radio pependit’.⁴³ [It hung so firmly on the ray of sun]. Then continues by equating Aldhelm’s miracle to that of Elijah. Faricius does not mention specifically which miracle of Elijah’s, yet it appears to equate with Elijah calling down fire from the sky.⁴⁴

William’s account is dramatic in that he claims that Aldhelm ‘[...] threw his vestment, which they call a chasuble, over his shoulder. He wrongly supposed that someone was standing there to catch it’.⁴⁵ William continues:

⁴¹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 248.

⁴² Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 249.

⁴³ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 361.

⁴⁴ *The Holy Bible: King James Version, The Second Book of Kings*, 1:10–14, pp. 406–407.

⁴⁵ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 249.

For at once a sunbeam gleamed brightly through the clear glass of the window, inserted itself under the chasuble and carried it, held somewhat above the ground, across the empty space.⁴⁶

Both Faricius and William refer to the chasuble later being taken to Malmesbury and revered as a relic of a miracle. Such a profound miracle related specifically to Malmesbury, in the form of the preserved chasuble, would inevitably draw pilgrims, thus putting Malmesbury firmly on the map. Faricius does not describe the chasuble, yet William gives a detailed description, of what he alleges to be, the original chasuble, stating that it was present and carefully preserved in Malmesbury in his day: 'It is made of very fine thread, dyed a full, deep scarlet colour from the juices of shellfish. It has black roundels with pictures of peacocks worked inside'.⁴⁷

Both Faricius and William highlight Aldhelm's significant impression on the Pope regarding his holy living. Equally, they both declare Aldhelm was given privileges by the Pope. William includes in his account a copy of the Papal Bull granted. This inclusion is significant as it verifies Aldhelm's favourable impression on Pope Sergius I.

⁴⁶ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 249.

⁴⁷ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 250.



Figure 2. The Church of Saint John Lateran in Rome Originally Founded in the Fourth Century (author's own photograph)

Baby Miracle

The miracle involving a baby occurred whilst Aldhelm was still in Rome. The puzzle lies both in the extraordinary event itself, as recorded by Faricius and William, and its inclusion in only one of the fifteenth-century texts, that of the Abbotsford MS. It is, however, also included in Capgrave's (1393–1464) account of the life of Aldhelm in the *Nova Legenda Anglie* and was therefore known widely in England.⁴⁸

As William indicates, this was to be Aldhelm's second miracle in Rome. A woman of the Pope's household, who had taken the veil, had recently given birth to a son:⁴⁹ 'Soon, not just in unsure suspicion but amid a public outcry the Pope was being pointed at as the guilty person'. Indeed, William emphasises that the 'people', later referred to as 'citizens' were effectively baying for the Pope's blood. It is not clear whether the people or citizens are members of the Pope's court or the general public. 'Next he was said to be guilty of all crimes, then that he merited a crucifixion as bad as could be imagined'.⁵⁰ This statement could perhaps been seen as William equating the Pope's dire situation to that of Christ being subject to cries for crucifixion, highlighting the injustice of the outcry against an innocent. William continues with a robust defence of the Pontiff listing his blameless and devout qualities.⁵¹ He urges those in doubt to read the numerous letters and documents attesting to this fact.

Again, William is emphasising evidence. It is at this frantic stage that Aldhelm, spurred on by the injustice that William has described, decides to intervene. William quotes Aldhelm's words: '[...] Aldhelm, becoming a little more angry through his knowledge of the Pope's purity, said 'Bring the child here, so that he may disprove with his own lips the charge against the Pope [...]'.⁵²

William tells us that despite initial jeers, in particular of a foreign man interfering, the child was brought to him. It is significant here to emphasise that Faricius and William both categorically state that the babe was scarcely nine days old. They state that Aldhelm asked the child if the Pope was his father. William accounts the miracle thus:

⁴⁸ Carl Horstman, *Nova Legenda Anglie: As Collected by John of Tynemouth, John Capgrave, and Others, and First Printed, with New Lives, by Wynkyn de Worde a.d. m d xvi*. Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), pp. 38–40.

⁴⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 250.

⁵⁰ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 250.

⁵¹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 251.

⁵² Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 251.

At that moment you would have seen the grace of God in action, for the little lad, making an effort, undid the knot of doubt and in the clearest voice declared that Sergius was pure and innocent and had never had any dealings with the woman.⁵³

In Faricius's account of the baby miracle Aldhelm asks the child of nine days old, 'novem dierum spatium' [the space of nine days], 'quanquam nimium parvulus' [although too little] if the claims of the crowd were true, and the child answered in a clear voice 'non esse genitum illius opere' [not being begotten of his work] that the Pope was not his father, which caused the crowd to rejoice at the news, Yet, whilst Faricius's description of the event strongly implies that a miracle has occurred by using the term 'contra naturam' [against nature], in that a supernatural event had occurred, he does not specifically name it as such.⁵⁴

William, on the other hand, states emphatically that the event was a miracle: 'The crowd cheered the miracle. The innocent Pope rejoiced in his triumph. Rome rang with the praise of Aldhelm's worth, and the shouts of exultation struck the stars themselves and echoed back redoubled'.⁵⁵ In comparing both Faricius's and William's accounts of the baby miracle, the fundamental content is the same whilst the narrative differs in style, which is consistent with other events in their own individually unique rendition of the life of Aldhelm.

Return to England

Faricius and William note that on his return to England Aldhelm presented his privileges from the Pope to King Ine of Sussex (West) and Ethelred King of Mercia. Both agree that the privileges were for Malmesbury. Only William offers an account of a miracle concerning Aldhelm's journey back to England from Rome.⁵⁶ While travelling over the Alps with a sizeable altar of white marble being carried on a beast of burden, the animal stumbled under the weight with exhaustion and the altar fell to the ground and broke. After prayerful intervention by Aldhelm, the animal, William suspects it must have been a camel, was restored to health and the break in the altar mended. William assures the reader that a crack still remains in the altar visible in his day as a reminder. It had been given to King Ine who placed

⁵³ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 251.

⁵⁴ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, pp. 361–362.

⁵⁵ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 251.

⁵⁶ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 253.

it in Bruton town.⁵⁷ Such detail of local knowledge would provide further impetus for pilgrims to visit Malmesbury and to seek out the altar as part of their pilgrimage.

Treatise on the Date of Easter and Other Writings

Aldhelm's Treatise on the date of Easter, it is noted in Bede, Faricius and William. It is also included in the MS 72 and Caxton, but not in the Abbotsford MS. Bede states that Aldhelm wrote the treatise at the behest of '[...] a synod of his own people'.⁵⁸ The purpose of the treatise was to correct the Britains who were celebrating Easter on a date contrary to Roman Catholic observances. Bede tells us that Aldhelm's treatise caused many of the West Saxons to follow his lead.

Bede refers to Aldhelm's writing *De virginitate* [On Virginity], specifically stating that it was written in '[...] verse and prose on the model of Sedulius'.⁵⁹ William refers to it as 'In Praise of Virginity'.⁶⁰ Faricius also mentions this text, as well as Aldhelm's book of riddles the *Enigmata*: 'Scripsit ergo Aenigmata, et De laude virginum [...]' [he wrote the Enigmata and the Praise of Virgins].⁶¹ Bede does not speak of the *Enigmata* specifically, only to add that Aldhelm composed further texts. William simply refers to this text as 'Mysteries' and praised Aldhelm's playful, yet adroit, poetic dexterity.⁶² Neither of the three fifteenth-century manuscripts allude to the *Enigmata*.

Counsellor to Brightwolde, Archbishop of Canterbury

William and Faricius both mention Berhtwald/Berthwaldus as Archbishop of Canterbury, who is referred to in the MS 72 and Caxton as Brightwolde. It was he who ordained the

⁵⁷ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 253.

⁵⁸ Bede, *Ecclesiastic History*, p. 298.

⁵⁹ Bede, *Ecclesiastic History*, p. 299. Coelius Sedulius was a fifth-century Christian poet, date of birth and death unknown, his *Paschale Carmen* is dated to between 425 AD and 450 AD. See Carl P.E. Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity: The Paschale Carmen of Sedulius* (Leiden: G.J. Brill, 1998).

⁶⁰ For translation of *De virginitate* see Michael Lapidge, and Michael Herren, trans., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp.59–132.

⁶¹ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 365.

⁶² For a translation and analysis of the *Enigmata* see: A.M. Juster, trans., *St Aldhelm's Riddles* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

reluctant Aldhelm as Bishop of Sherborne (705).⁶³ The fifteenth-century versions state that Aldhelm became Brightwolde's confessor, this is not the case in any of the earlier versions. While acknowledging that Aldhelm became Bishop after the death of Haeddi, who had been bishop of the West Saxons, Bede omits to mention Bertwald's involvement in the proceedings. Bede does, however, state that, as with Faricius and William, the bishopric was divided between Aldhelm and Daniel.⁶⁴

Dover Tempest Miracle

Faricius and William both offer accounts of this event. Whilst walking along the seashore at Dover Aldhelm was being observant of the goods for sale by mariners. William informs 'Aldhelm spotted a complete Old and New Testament bound together in one volume'.⁶⁵ As Aldhelm haggled over the price with the merchants they became abusive to him and began to taunt his haggling saying he had no right to question the price. Aldhelm responded with merely a smile. In their frustration, the sailors pushed him away and sailed from the shore quite pleased with themselves.

Both Faricius and William tell of a tempest that arose and threaten to capsize the ship. The sailors realised it was punishment from the Lord for deriding one of His subjects. They became full of remorse and prayed for forgiveness. Aldhelm prayed for them, because he loved them, and the sea calmed. The sailors returned to the shore, and full of contrition promptly gave Aldhelm the Bible he had previously seen. As Faricius states 'Mox illi offerunt Sancto volumen, Veteri ac Novo Testamento compactum [...]' [soon they offered the holy volume of the Old and New Testament bound together].⁶⁶ This statement is in agreement with William's description of the object in question. Both Faricius and William state that the Bible was then taken to Malmesbury as yet another relic of Aldhelm's, inevitably adding to the locality popularity with pilgrims. As Faricius claims 'Librum vero, bonitatis ope acquisi-

⁶³ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 255.

⁶⁴ Bede, *Ecclesiastic History*, p. 298.

⁶⁵ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 256.

⁶⁶ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 367.

tum, ad Meldunense' [the book of truth, acquired with the goodness of help, to Malmesbury].⁶⁷ William writes 'The book can still be seen at Malmesbury today, providing a venerable specimen of antiquity'.⁶⁸

Holiness

As previously mentioned, Aldhelm's holiness is represented in Faricius as analogies with the virtues of biblical characters such as Job, Elijah, and Paul. Faricius also compares Aldhelm's holiness to that of Abraham in obedience and perseverance, and Jeremiah in his solitary good works, when describing his entrance to monastic life:

Imitabatur hic religiosissimus Testamenti veteris justissimos Patres, in sua unumquemque anima sancta virtute: Abraham scilicet, in hospitalitatis reverendo studio, atque in preserverantia obedientiae, quae bonorum operum creditor perfectio: Jerimiam quoque, solitariis degentem scrobibus, atque laudabili remotione a conspectus hominum.⁶⁹

[And in imitating this the most just religious fathers of the Old Testament, the power of the holy soul, on their own each one: Abraham, of course, in the study of revered hospitality, and in the perseverance of obedience, which the creditor is the perfection of good works: Jerimiah too, to the solitary one living into the depths, and in the praiseworthy removal from the sight of men].

Saint Nicholas is also referred to regarding Aldhelm's piety 'O virum caritate repletum, pietate plenum! Qui Beati Nicolai vestigia secutus [...]'. [Oh man filled with love, full of pity! who followed in the footsteps of Blessed Nicholas]⁷⁰ Perhaps this is done as a reflection of Saint Nicholas' selfless generosity, as mentioned previously with reference to pious shrewdness, in protecting the integrity, and indeed virginity, of three daughters of a father who was to sell them into prostitution in order to make a living.

⁶⁷ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, pp. 368.

⁶⁸ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 257.

⁶⁹ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 358.

⁷⁰ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 367.

William highlights Aldhelm's holiness, but not in such an emblematic way as Faricius, and not so frequently. In describing how Aldhelm lived his life as a monk William declares 'His devotion to reading was so frequent and his devotion to prayer so intense, that, as he himself said in a letter, while reading he heard God speaking, and while praying he was speaking to God'.⁷¹

Final Years

Faricius tells us that Aldhelm worked hard for four years as Bishop before he died 'Episcopum per annos quatuor strenuosissime rexisset [...]' [Bishop for four years strenuously ruling].⁷² This detail is also mentioned in William, where he further states that Aldhelm was chosen as Bishop of Sherborne, specifically mentioned, due to his '...abundant learning and his unequalled holiness.'⁷³

Both Faricius and William speak of a miracle that occurred whilst Aldhelm was dying. The miracle was of a blind woman, who was well known in the town, fighting through the crowds to be near Aldhelm and became cured of her blindness.⁷⁴ This account is in none of the fifteenth-century Golden Legend versions.

Bishop Egwine's Pilgrimage to Rome

Bishop Egwine's pilgrimage to Rome in chains after Aldhelm's death is documented in both the MS 72 and Caxton, but not in the Abbotsford MS; it is present in both Faricius and William.⁷⁵ Faricius speaks of:

Eo autem tempore Sanctus Egwinus, Vigornienis Ecclesiae Episcopus, vir quidem et ipse doctrina et opera probatissimus, Romam pergunt orationis causa cum compendium vincula, divino (ut fas est credere) monitus alloquio, Meldunum Praesul venit, ut defuncto Pontifici debitum redderet obsequium.

⁷¹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 243.

⁷² Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 368.

⁷³ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 255.

⁷⁴ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 369., Preest, *Gesta*, p.260.

⁷⁵ Regarding the life of Bishop Egwine, see Stephen Yeager, 'The South English Legendary-Life of Saint Egwine: An Edition, *Traditio*, 82 (2011): 171–187.

Here Faricius states that Bishop Egwine carried out his penitent pilgrimage to seek absolution for his sins from the Holy Father: ‘Sanctus Egwinus [...] Pontifici debitum redderet obsequium [Saint Egwine (...) to pay a debt of service to the Pontiff].’⁷⁶ William’s account relates that Egwine ‘attempted that arduous journey voluntarily bound in fetters and got through to the end of it’.⁷⁷ The reason for the inclusion of the pilgrimage of Bishop Egwine († 717) in the life of Saint Aldhelm is perhaps twofold. In the first instance an inclusion of a further pilgrimage to Rome could add weight to Aldhelm’s venture to the Holy City. Unlike Aldhelm, Egwine’s reason is clearly penitent which is emphasised by his chains. His penance is a punishment for his overly-strict preaching in his diocese of Evesham which caused his parishioners to demand his resignation.⁷⁸ In the second instance, Egwine could be included simply as he was a relatively contemporaneous bishop, whose diocese was in the vicinity of Aldhelm’s, both of whom are Benedictine, who happened to go on pilgrimage to Rome which was a common occurrence at the time.

Deathbed Curse and Blessing

Reference to a deathbed curse equating to those found in the MS 72 and Caxton, but not Abbotsford, is in William’s copy of the Papal Bull issued by Pope Sergius in 701 for Malmesbury. In it a curse is stated to visit anyone who ‘[...] attempts to transgress or defile our decrees [...]’, plus a blessing will be bestowed on any who protects it.⁷⁹ It refers specifically to Ananias and Sapphira who were struck down by Saint Peter when their lies were revealed. Faricius also mentions ‘Ananiam namque et Saphiram [...] [Ananias now and Sapphira]’⁸⁰ but not in the context of the Papal Bull. Deathbed curses and blessings appear in medieval lives of saints for possible redeeming as well as merciless purposes.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, pp. 370.

⁷⁷ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 263.

⁷⁸ Stephen Yeager, ‘Documents, Poetry and Editorial Practice: The Case of St Egwine’, in Heather Blurton and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds., *Rethinking the South English Legendaries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 168–186.

⁷⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 253.

⁸⁰ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 375.

⁸¹ J. P. Harrington, ‘Vengeance and Saintly Cursing in the Saints’ Lives of England and Ireland, c.1060-1215 (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2017), p. 17.

Translation of Body and Shrine Miracles

William tells us that Aldhelm died in the year 709 and that his body remained in Saint Michael's church for two hundred and forty-six years.⁸² He later informs that Aethelwulf gave a gift of a silver shrine to contain the Saint's relics. William describes the shrine in detail including the gold plaque bearing Aldhelm's name. Numerous shrine miracles are attested to by both William and Faricius that are not in the MS 72 or Caxton. For example, Faricius gives ample warning of the threat of the Norwegians and Danes upon Britain, and offers an account of Danes attacking the shrine to steal the jewels that bedecked it, as the thief approached the shrine in a determined manner he was physically thrust back by the power of Aldhelm, thus the shrine remained intact.⁸³ This account is also in William.⁸⁴ Faricius dedicates a significant part of his life of the saint subsequent to Aldhelm's death in warning of the dangers of marauding Danes and Norwegians. The three fifteenth-century manuscripts mention neither the miracle nor the threat from Scandinavians.

Ending

It is important to note that the chapter in which Bede discusses Aldhelm is entitled: 'The South Saxons receive as their bishops Eadbert and Ealla, and the West Saxons Daniel and Aldhelm. The writings of Aldhelm', indicating that the life of Aldhelm *per se* was not the intended focus of Bede's chapter, nevertheless, Aldhelm's writings are worthy of note.⁸⁵ Thus, in mentioning Aldhelm's death Bede announces that 'At his death, forthere, who is also a man of great learning in the scriptures, was appointed to the bishopric in his place and is still living today'.⁸⁶ The specific bishop is not mentioned. Bede continues his refrain regarding bishops and ends with the bishopric having fallen into neglect and disuse. Perhaps such an ending, and without direct focus on Aldhelm, does not warrant a prayer.

⁸² Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 263.

⁸³ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 373.

⁸⁴ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 281.

⁸⁵ Bede, *Ecclesiastic History*, p. 298.

⁸⁶ Bede, *Ecclesiastic History*, p. 299.

Conclusion

In conclusion, findings encountered in the three original sources of the life of Saint Aldhelm reveal that Bede offers a very different angle compared to Faricius and William, in particular homage to the nature of Aldhelm's holiness, which is vaguely present in Bede. However, Faricius's the *Vita Aldhelmi*, ends with a prayer 'ad laudem et gloriam Domini nostri Jesu Christi, qui vivit et regnat per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen'.⁸⁷ William's chapter dedicated to Saint Aldhelm is entitled 'Aldhelm and Malmesbury Abbey'.⁸⁸ It could be argued that perhaps promoting Malmesbury Abbey was his principal focus. William builds up to the end of his chapter, indeed the end of his book, with numerous miracles attributed to Aldhelm and Malmesbury. His closing comments give a brief account of events in England, and beyond, at the time of his writing, 1125. For example, rampant forgery in England causing the price of corn to rise dramatically, and the death of Pope Calixtus.⁸⁹ It appears to be rather a commentary on the times than heralding the life of his champion, Aldhelm. Somewhat surprisingly, considering William's fervent zeal in his introduction to telling the true story of the life of such a holy and neglected saint, does not finish with a dedication or prayer. Instead, William offers 'It has also been a black year for weather. Every month has had thunder and lightning. It has rained almost every day without stopping. Even the summer months were wet and muddy.'⁹⁰

The following chapter explores the life of Saint Aldhelm as it appears in three fifteenth-century Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*. A detailed transcription and comparison of these manuscripts will reveal which elements of the original sources are retained, which are dismissed, plus a consideration of possible additional content and their purposes.

⁸⁷ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 382.

⁸⁸ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 223.

⁸⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 305.

⁹⁰ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 305.

Chapter Six

A Textual Comparison of Accounts of the life of St Aldhelm in Three Middle English versions of the *Legenda Aurea*

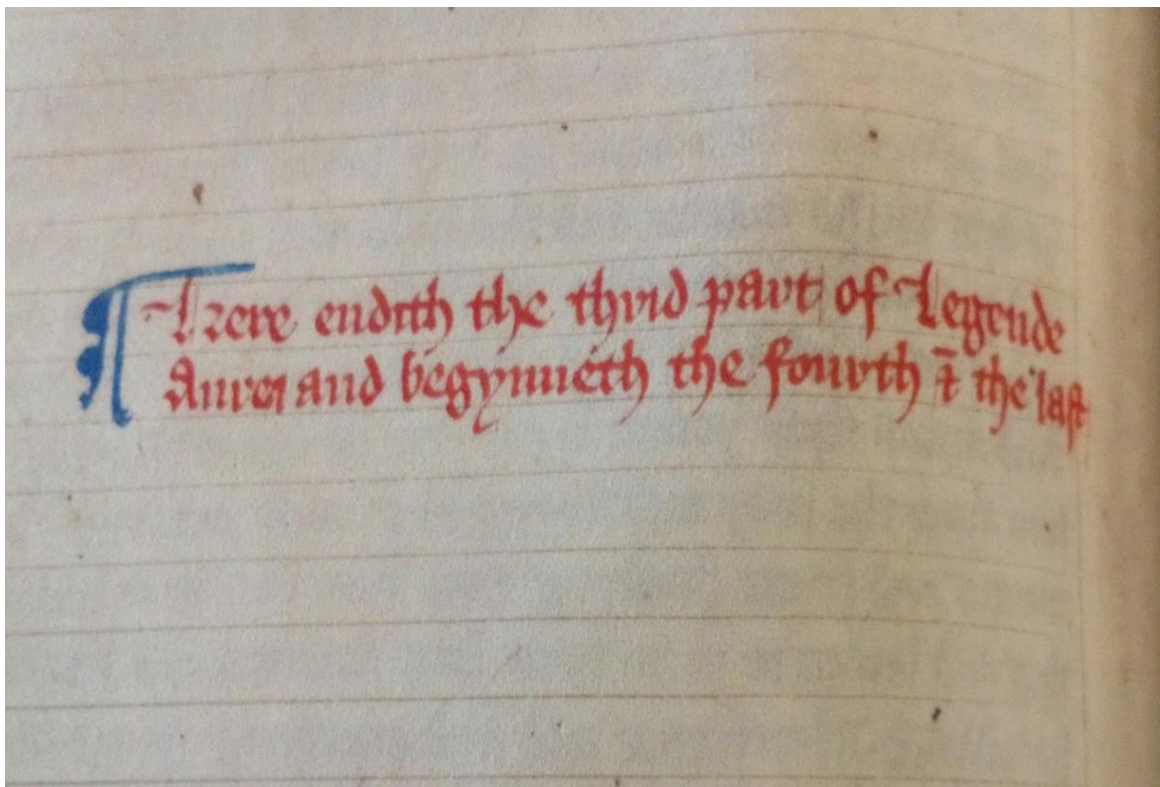


Figure 3. Abbotsford House Manuscript Evidence of the *Legenda aurea* (1443–1449)
Image reproduced with kind permission courtesy of the Faculty of Advocates Abbotsford
Collection Trust.

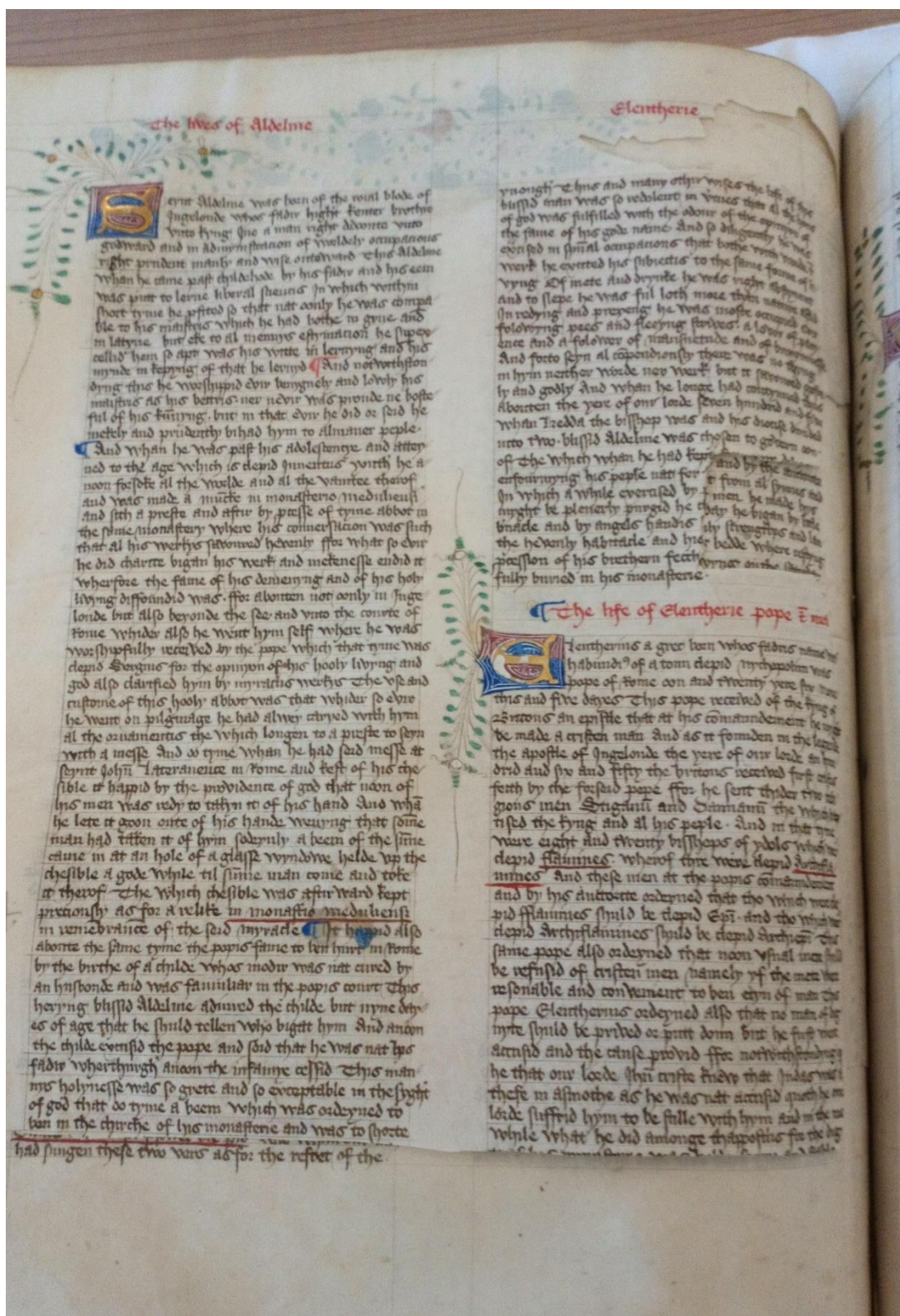


Figure 4. The Abbotsford House Manuscript *Legenda Aurea* Life of Saint Aldhelm (1443–1449). Image reproduced with kind permission courtesy of the Faculty of Advocates Abbotsoford Collection Trust.

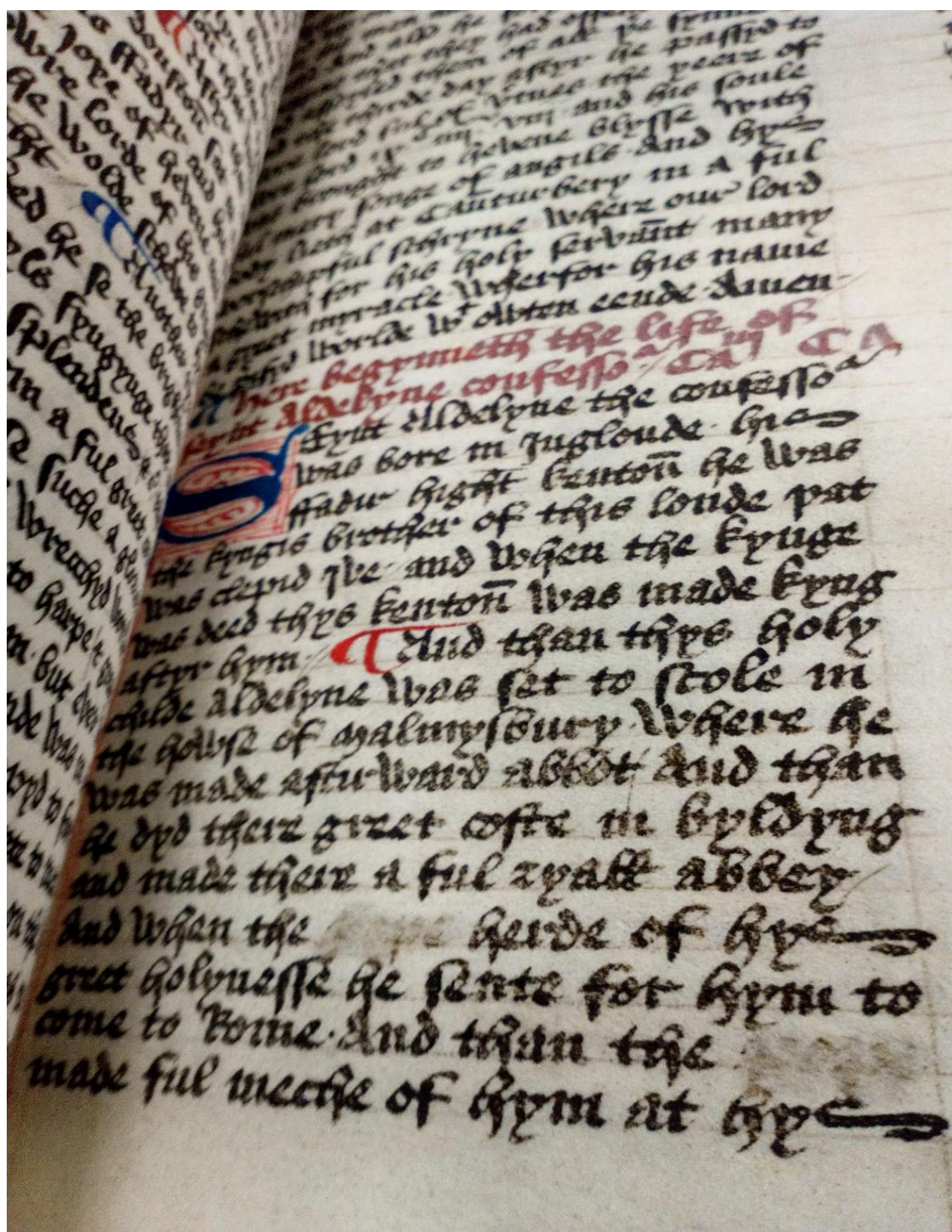


Figure 5. Lambeth Palace the MS 72 *Gilte Legende* Life of Saint Aldhelm (1438). Image reproduced with kind permission courtesy of Lambeth Palace Library.

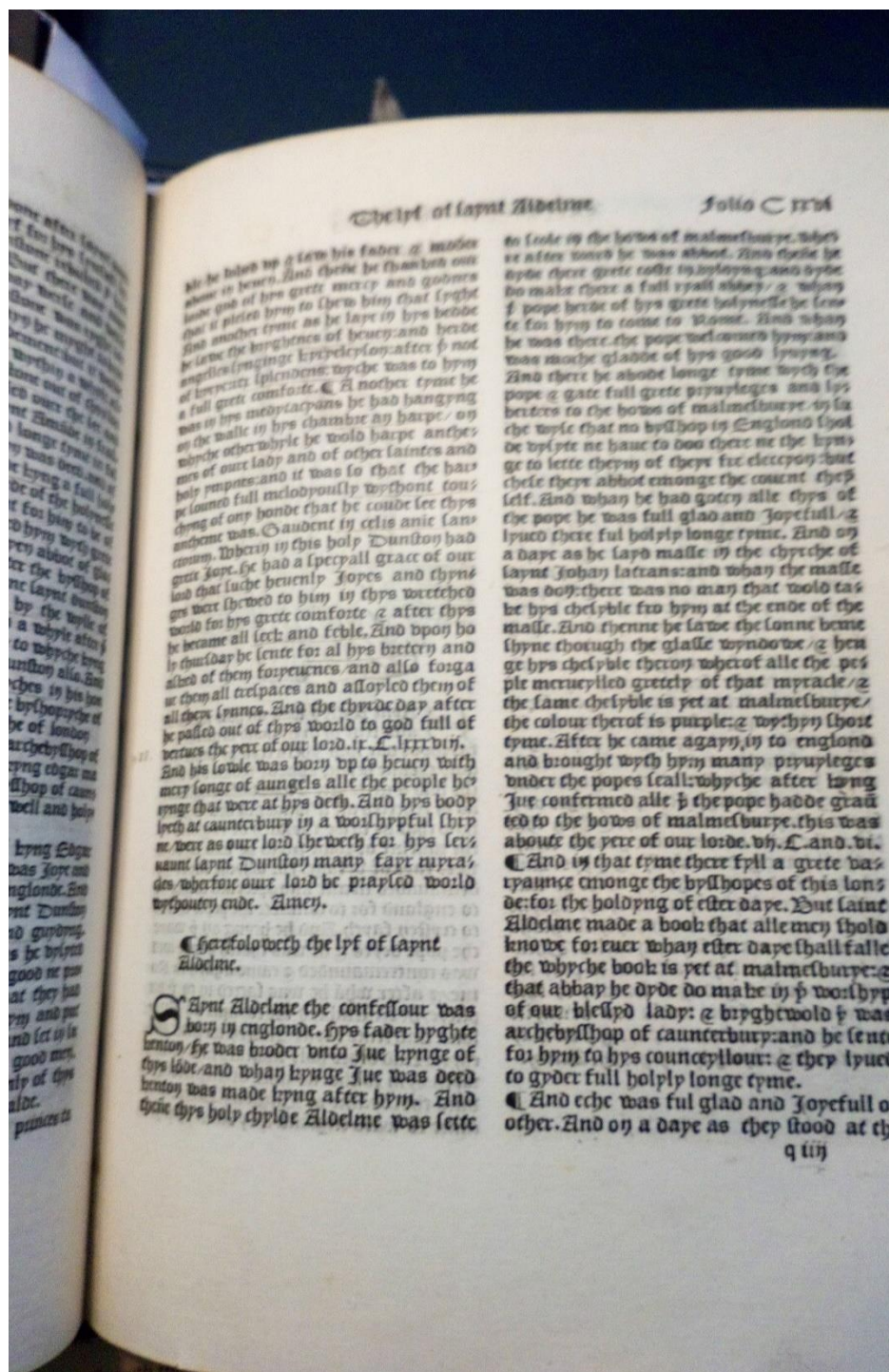


Figure 6. The British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.11 c.16 Caxton's Printed Edition as the *Golden Legende* life of Saint Aldhelm (1498). Image reproduced with kind permission courtesy of the British Library.

Introduction

The codices chosen to be studied are three fifteenth-century Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*. The Abbotsford House Manuscript (1443–1449) (See figures 1 and 2) (henceforth the Abbotsford MS), the Lambeth Palace Manuscript 72 (1438) (See figure 3) (henceforth the MS 72), and the British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.11 c.16 Caxton's printed edition, imprint date (1498) used in this thesis (See figure 4); original print date (1484) (henceforth Caxton).¹ The documents are in Middle English, two are handwritten on vellum, and the third is the first printed version. These documents were chosen primarily because they are Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*, which is the focus of this thesis, which contain the life of Saint Aldhelm. As a model for the development of my methodology regarding provenance, description and editorial approach to the manuscripts and incunable, Anthony Bale and A. S. G. Edwards' analysis of John Lydgate's the *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund and the Extra Miracles of St Edmund*, which they edited from British Library MS Harley 2278 and Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 46, was most useful.²

¹ Recent research states March 1484 as the date when Caxton first produced his printed version, whereas 1483 was the commonly held date. See Judy Ann Ford, *English Readers of Catholic Saints: The Printing History of William Caxton's Golden Legend*, (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 18–42.

² Anthony Bale and A. S. G. Edwards, *John Lydgate's Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund and the Extra Miracles of St Edmund: Edited from British Library ms Harley2278 and Bodleian Library ms Ashmole 46*, Middle English Texts 41, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2009). See also, D. C. Greetham, *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction*, (London: Garland Publishing, 1994). See also, for example model of comparison table: Gleb Schmidt, 'A St Petersburg Manuscript of the *Excerptio Roberti Herefordensis de Chronica Mariani Scotti*', pp. 69–92, in Laura Cleaver and Andrea Worm, eds., *Writing History in the Anglo-Norman World: Manuscripts, Makers, and Readers, c. 1066–c. 1250*, (York: York Medieval Press, 2018).

The only other version of the life of Aldhelm in the fifteenth-century is that of John Capgrave (1393–1464) as the *De Sancto Aldelmo* in the *Nova Legenda Anglie*, available as a Latin edition.¹ The specific area of study for this thesis is the life of Saint Aldhelm explicit to fifteenth-century Middle English versions of the *Golden Legend*, therefore, Capgrave's in the *Nova Legenda Anglie* is not included in this study as it is not specifically a version of the *Legenda aurea*. Yet, Capgrave's version of the life of Saint Aldhelm is fruitful for future research. Capgrave's account is contemporaneous with both the MS 72 (1438) and the Abbotsford MS (1443–1449), however, not with Caxton's version which appeared after Capgrave's in 1484. Capgrave's life of Saint Aldhelm follows Bede's, Faricius's and William's accounts, acknowledging Bede's original contribution echoing Faricius and William.

Saint Aldhelm (639–709), feast day 25th May, was chosen as the focus saint for this thesis, as, despite his initial popularity, he appears to have disappeared into obscurity, until he appears in the twelfth-century in works of Faricius of Abingdon († 1117) and William of Malmesbury (1095–1143), then re-emerging in the fifteenth century. The life of Saint George is the only saint to have been so far studied in the Abbotsford House manuscript, moreover, the document itself was only recently discovered. It was compelling to discover if Caxton's first printed version would reveal similarities. Whilst Butler and then Görlach briefly touch on Saint Aldhelm with reference to his appearance in Caxton, the life itself has not been analysed in detail within that context.²

¹ Carl Horstman, *Nova Legenda Anglie: As Collected by John of Tynemouth, John Capgrave, and Others, and First Printed, with New Lives, by Wynkyn de Worde a.d. m d xvi*. Vol 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), pp. 38–40.

² Pierce Butler, *Legenda Aurea, Légende Dorée, Golden Legend: A Study of Caxton's Golden Legend with Special Reference to its Relations to the Earlier Prose Traditions* (Baltimore, NJ: Murphy, 1899). Also, Manfred Görlach, *The South English Legendary, Gilte legende and Golden Legend*, Braunschweiger Anglistische Arbeiten, 3, (Braunschweig: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1972).

Description of Manuscripts

The Abbotsford House Manuscript (Henceforth the Abbotsford MS)

Date: 1443–1449³

Title: the *Legenda aurea*

Author: Attributed to Osbern Bokenham by Simon Horobin⁴

Provenance: Discovered in 2004 in the library collection of Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford House. Scott had bought the manuscript at an auction in Southerby's in 1809 for £15.15s.

Purported to be the lost *Legenda aurea* of Osbern Bokenham.⁵

Content: Mainly prose with occasional verse

Foliation: 214 fols

Position of Aldhelm in the codex:

The life of Saint Aldhelm f. 110^r–111^v (named as Aldelme, with no status such as bishop or confessor) is positioned between Saint Urban and Saint Eleutherie 'Pope and martyr'. Urban is not given the heading 'Pope', nevertheless he is stated as Pope in the text of his life. Thus, Saint Aldhelm is positioned between two Popes.⁶ The English saints are not clustered together, however, the English Saint Dunstan appears close by, before Saint Urban. It is to be noted that on folio 109^r the words 'Here endeth the third part of the *Legenda Aurea* and begineth the fourth and last part'. See figure 1.

Language: Middle English

³ Simon Horobin, 'A Manuscript Found in the Library of Abbotsford House and the Lost Legendary of Osbern Bokenham' *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700*, 14 (2008): 130–162. So far, this manuscript has only been studied by Horobin who details the document itself with an analysis of the life of Saint George. This saint is the only saint that has been studied in this text.

⁴ Simon Horobin, 'Politics, Patronage and Piety in the work of Osbern Bokenham', *Speculum*, 82:4 (2007): 932 – 949. See also, Alice Spencer, *Language, Lineage and Location in the Works of Osbern Bokenham* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013).

⁵ Simon Horobin, 'A Manuscript Found in the Library of Abbotsford House and the Lost Legendary of Osbern Bokenham', *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700*, 14 (2008): 130–162.

⁶ In Voragine's original *Legenda Aurea* Saint Urban (feast day 25th May, the same as Saint Aldhelm) is positioned as 77. See Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 314–315. Saint Eleutherie (feast day 26th May) is positioned in Voragine collectively with Saints Dionysius and Rusticus as 153. See Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 622–627.

Physical Description:

Material is leather binding with ribbed spine with some damage to the join. Total length is 405mm, 280mm wide. The spine contains the words '*Legenda Aurea Sanctorum*'. The paper glued inside cover bears the family crest of Roberti Smyth Baronetti in the centre. At the top of the insider cover is inscribed 'Abbotsford Library B3' in cursive sepia. In pencil it is written 'to be kept in B I', followed by 'Lib. B. 1. 5.' There are two blank fly leaves inside the back cover. The first page, almost loose, has the contents of the document in cursive sepia. The content marked with an asterix are in metre.

The text itself is of vellum, each page is 390mm long and 280mm wide. Each page has two columns of fifty-six lines per column. The pages are visibly pricked and ruled. There are no marginal glosses. The script appears to be written by more than one scribe using fifteenth-century English Secretary Hand, Bastard Secretary and Anglicana.⁷ Horobin supports this view, adding that the initial scribe employs Fere Textura Hand.⁸ The pages are decorated with elegant foliated flourishes of sepia edging, coloured with blue-green, reddy-brown, and white highlights, completed with gold dots.

There is notable damage of crude cut-outs. In Aldhelm's folios the decoration at the top of the title page is cut out on the left side of the design leaving a 80 x 25mm hole in extremis. At 55mm from the top of the left-hand column on f110, the decoration at the left of the page is cut out leaving a 70mm gap, leaving 110mm decoration. Followed by a further 20mm cut from the bottom far left of the page. 90mm has been cut from the whole bottom of the text, thereby, destroying part of the text of the life of Urban, and over the page, Elentherie. Tantalisingly, the cut completely across the bottom of the page leaves the end of the life of Urban, underneath which is written 'The life of seynt Aldelme'. A 30mm square is cut out at the beginning of the life of Urban, clearly the illuminated initial. This, in turn, has removed an equal sized portion of the life of Aldhelm at the end of his text. However, this is

⁷ Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*, (London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 166–168. See also, Michelle P. Brown, *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Also, C.E. Wright, *English Vernacular Hands: From the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

⁸ Simon Horobin, 'A Manuscript Found in the Library of Abbotsford House and the Lost Legendary of Osbern Bokenham', *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700*, 14 (2008): 130–162.

the only damage to the text of Aldhelm, his red, blue and gold illuminated initial, with floral flourishes, remains intact.

The Lambeth Palace Manuscript 72 (Henceforth MS 72)

Date: 1438

Title: The *Gilte Legende*

Author: Anonymous

Provenance: Transferred in 1996 from Syon Library Canterbury, on its closure along with all other pre-1850 documents in its possession, to Lambeth Palace library⁹

Content: Prose

Foliation: 874 fols

Position of Aldhelm in the codex:

The life of Saint Aldhelm fols. 244^v–245^r (named as Aldelyne the Confessor) is positioned between tenth-century bishop Oswald and sixth-century Saint Theophile the clerk.¹⁰ The twelve English saints accounted for in the manuscript are clustered together. However, the inclusion of sixth-century Saint Theophile, from continent Europe, in this cluster is puzzling. Each life in the document begins with ‘Here begineth the life of [...]’.

Language: Middle English

Physical description:

Material is leather and card binding, with ribbed spine. It has two paper fly leaves, one front and one back. There is one blank dark vellum front folio which is miss-matched to the rest of the document and contains lacunae. The Lambeth Palace coat of arms is carved into the leather cover front and back with gold relief. There are no traces of chaining. The

⁹ O. S. Pickering and V. M. O’Mara, *Index of Middle English Prose Handlist XIII: Manuscripts in Lambeth palace Library, Including Those Formerly in Sion College Library*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): pp. xvi–xvii.

¹⁰ Neither Saint Bishop Oswald (feast day 28th February) or Saint Theophile the clerk (feast day 6th February) are included in Voragine.

document itself is vellum. Its general condition shows visible ruling, as well as holes, patches and cut-outs, but these do not affect the script.

The text begins halfway through the life of Saint Agnes, marked as page 41, it is, therefore, missing a possible prologue and 39 St' lives. Each page's dimensions are 340mm long and 220mm wide. There are 2 columns per page, each column is 227mm long and 70mm wide. The script is fifteenth-century English Secretary hand. This is supported by Michele Sauer who suggests the script is 'clear and consistent secretary'.¹¹ Sauer has studied the life of Saint Juliana, and the lives of Saint Praxedis and Prudentiana in the MS 72. She notes that the document possesses 'a wealth of unpublished hagiographic legends. The manuscript is an excellently preserved specimen of late medieval devotional material'.¹² The life of Saint Aldhelm is marked with alternate red and blue paragraph markers, as are other lives of noticeable length such as Bishop Oswald. This is noted by M. R. James and Claude Jenkins in their 'Descriptive Catalogue' created in the early 1930s, the scribe's hand being Secretary is also noted.¹³

Noticeable damage is in the life of Saint Aldhelm where most occasions that the word 'Pope' occurs in the text it has been scratched out, most likely a post-Reformation adjustment to the text in support of the English monarch and against the papacy.¹⁴ However, this phenomenon only is evidenced in Saint Aldhelm's life in the entire manuscript. Other seemingly deliberate damage is in the life of Thomas of Canterbury, which is general damage rather than specific to the word 'Pope'.

¹¹ Michele M. Sauer, 'The Legend of St Juliana from Lambeth MS 72', *ANQ*, 18:4 (2005) 9–15.

¹² Michele M. Sauer, 'Saints Praxedis and Prudentiana in *The Golden Legend* and the *Stacions of Rome*: Fragments from MS Lambeth Palace 72 and MS BL Additional 222831', *ANQ*, 19:2 (2006) 10–16.

¹³ M. R. James and Claude Jenkins, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace. 5 Parts. 1: Medieval Manuscripts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), pp. 116–117.

¹⁴ Ford, Judy Ann, *English Readers of Catholic Saints: The Printing History of William Caxton's Golden Legend*, (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 171.

William Caxton the British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.II c.16

Caxton's printed Edition of *Golden Legende* (henceforth Caxton)

Date: 1498 (imprint)

Title: The *Golden Legende*

Author: William Caxton

Provenance: First printed version of the *Legenda aurea* in Middle English. Stated by Caxton to be drawn from three versions, one of Latin, one of French and the other English.¹⁵

Content: In prose

Foliation: 445 fols

Position of Aldhelm in content:

The life of Saint Aldhelm fols186^v – 187^r (named as 'Saynt Aldelme the confessour' in the text but not in the title, which has 'Here foloweth the lyf of Saynt Aldelme'). The life is situated after the life of Saint Dunstone (Dunstan) and before the life of Saint Austyn.¹⁶

Language: Middle English

Physical description:

The binding is black leather with a crown emblem with 'GR' under the crown. The binding measures 320mm in length and 220mm in width. The spine has the words 'The *Golden Legende*'. There are 4 fly leaf pages at the beginning. The document has a 'Van Geld' watermark. Folio 51 has Caxton's trademark at the beginning of the section entitled *Golden Legende*. The material is paper with printed black text. Each page contains 2 columns of 47 lines each measuring 220mm long and 75mm wide per column. It begins with a brief tabula introducing the 'lyves and hystorye' of Biblical characters. The incunabulum contains woodcut illustrations, primarily depicting the life of Christ. Occasionally a saint is illustrated, for

¹⁵ Mary Jeremy, 'The English Prose Translation of *Legenda Aurea*', *Modern Language Notes*, 59:3, (1944) 181–183.

¹⁶ The English Saint Dunstan (feast day 19th May) is not included in Voragine. Saint Austyn, the Middle English spelling of Saint Augustine, (feast day August 28th) is positioned in Voragine's original *Legenda Aurea* as 124. See Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 502–518.

example, Saint Austyn; Saint Aldhelm is not illustrated. The content pages referring to saints' lives are mostly alphabetised by name.¹⁷

There is some damage, in particular the life of Thomas of Canterbury has been somewhat violently crossed out. There are occasional commentaries in the margins. For example, 'contention between David and Goliath' alongside the tale. In the life of Aldhelm there is slight damage to line 31 column B where there is a small hole which interrupts the 'y' in 'kyng'.

Comparison of Manuscripts

The following is a comparison of the life of Saint Aldhelm in the three fifteenth-century Middle English versions of the *Golden Legend* described above. Namely, the Abbotsford MS the *Legenda aurea* (1443–49), the MS 72 Lambeth Palace the *Gilte Legende* (1438), and the British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.11 c.16 Caxton's printed edition the *Golden Legende* (1498). The comparison is taken from transcriptions carried out in situ. The entire individual transcriptions and a comparison of these separated into comparable sections of key events are presented in chapter seven.¹⁸ Appendix B offers a comparison table of the key events identified in the three documents in order to clearly ascertain which are inclusions or omissions. The following comparison will compare each of the key events identified in turn, beginning with 'Royal Blood'.

Since Bede, Faricius and William of Malmesbury's accounts of Saint Aldhelm there had been little written about him until he appears in three fifteenth-century Middle English versions of the *Golden Legend*. Görlach indicates that the life of Aldhelm is not present in original versions of the *SEL* (1270–1280), he later momentarily appears in some, but not all, subsequent additional lives, stating that these are deemed to be 'formulaic' and therefore

¹⁷ Saint Augustine was of much more importance than Aldhelm, thereby warranting illustration.

¹⁸ For codicological and palaeographic methodology to manuscript transcription see: Albert Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books: From the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), pp. 1–45. See also, Giulio Battelli, *Lezioni Di Paleografia*, 4 edn. Scuola Vaticana di Paleografia Diplomatica E Archivistica (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007), pp. 13–26.

taken from previous sources which considers a search for such originals to be redundant.¹⁹ However, Görlach neglects to refer to the original sources for the life of Aldhelm as Bede, Faricius and William.

Royal Blood

The first line of each *vita* introduces Saint Aldhelm by title. Whilst his name is spelled slightly differently: ‘Aldelme’, ‘Aldelyne’, and ‘Aldeme’ respectively, it is clear by the contents of each life that the narrative is about the same person. For the purpose of this analysis he will be referred to by his modern name of Aldhelm. Whilst the MS 72 and Caxton anoint Aldhelm as a confessor, the Abbotsford MS does not mention this title. However, it becomes apparent that this particular narrative is in agreement with the other manuscripts as Aldhelm is depicted as a confessor of Christ, as opposed to Aldhelm having a different status, such as martyr or pope. Vauchez points out that even though from early Christianity to the medieval period the identity of a saint had moved from, but not exclusively, martyr to confessor ‘in both cases it was the confession of faith which was crucial’.²⁰

It is evident in all three texts that Aldhelm was born in England. Moreover, all three attest to Aldhelm’s father being Kenton, the brother of King Ine. Yet, only the MS 72 and Caxton mention that on his brother’s death Kenton became King. Nevertheless, royal blood is established as Aldhelm’s lineage. It is at this early stage in the text where style of content begin to differ. Note that the MS 72 and Caxton appear to simply state facts of royal lineage. Whereas, the Abbotsford MS already begins to mention such saintly attributes as devoutness and wisdom in Aldhelm’s father and mother as ‘devout’, ‘godward’ and ‘prudent’,

[...] a man right devoute vuto

(Abbotsford MS lines 3–5)

godward and in Admynistration of worldely occupations

right prudent manbe and wife onteward this Aldehelme.

¹⁹ Manfred Görlach, *The South English Legendary, Gilte Legende and Golden Legend* (Braunschweig: Technische Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1998), pp. 53–54.

²⁰ André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 15.

Youth

In the youth of Saint Aldhelm, there is a marked difference between the Abbotsford MS and the other two. Again, the MS 72 and Caxton, whilst very briefly mentioning that Aldhelm was a ‘holy child’, state that he was sent to school. That school is claimed by Caxton to be Malmesbury, which indeed would have been the case according to earlier documents. It is further stated by both, that Aldhelm became abbot and built an abbey at great cost. These statements take five lines each text to tell. It is at this stage the almost identical similarities between the MS 72 and Caxton become evident. Was the MS 72 Caxton’s English source?

In the case of the Abbotsford MS, line 20 states that Aldhelm was made a monk in a monastery whose name corresponds with the location in Bede’s account of Aldhelm’s life: [...] While Aldhelm was still a priest, and abbot of the monastery known as Maelduib’s town.’²¹

[...] he a //

(Abbotsford MS lines 19–22)

noon forsoke al the worlde and all the vanitee therof
and was made a muⁿke monasteiro meduliensi
and sith a preste and aftir by presse of tyme abbot
in the same monastery.

The Abbotsford MS and Bede also refer to Aldhelm’s rise from priest to abbot. Although, the MS 72 and Caxton do not mention his priesthood. This could possibly be an ellipsis due to the implied nature of becoming an abbot is invariably preceded by priesthood. It is here that the focus of the Abbotsford MS differs notably from that of the MS 72 and Caxton. While the MS 72 and Caxton highlight Aldhelm’s practical achievements, in the building of an abbey at great cost, the Abbotsford MS devotes rich commentary on Aldhelm’s learned and saintly qualities in his early life which far outweigh his material attainments. His scholarly ability is expounded in:

²¹ Bede, *Ecclesiastic History*, p. 298.

[...] was putt to lerne liberal sciencis which withyn (Abbotsford MS lines 7–12)
 short time he p(ro)ftied so that nat oonly he was compa //
 able to his maistris which he had bothe in gvne and
 in latyne but each to all mennys estimation superior
 cellid hem so apt was his witt in lernyng and his
 mynde in kepyng of that he levnyd.

In a short time, not only was Aldhelm comparable to his masters in both Greek and Latin, but he was also adept at acquiring and maintaining such knowledge. His saintly qualities are thus expressed:

[...] and notwithston // (Abbotsford MS lines 12–16)
 dyng thus he worshipid evir benygnely and lowly his
 maistris as his betters • nev nevir was pronde ne boste //
 ful of his ti^{me}myng • but in that evir he did or seid he
 mekely and prudently bihad hym to almoner peple

This declaration clearly states that despite his remarkable academic achievement and ability he was not in danger of suffering from pride. Worshiping ‘ever benignly his masters as his betters’. It states that Aldhelm was ‘never proud nor boastful’, and was ‘just’ and ‘prudent’ towards others. This emphasis on Aldhelm’s marked avoidance of pride strongly echoes his own writing on its dangers, in such as his ‘Treatise on Virginitie’, as discussed earlier. Therefore, as can be seen below, the testament to Aldhelm’s holiness is thus so far championed by the Abbotsford MS, whilst, briefly alluded to by the MS 72 and Caxton suggesting that the purpose, or possible intended audience, of Abbotsford MS differs from MS 72 and Caxton. Here we see from the Abbotsford MS further emphasis of Aldhelm’s ‘meekness’ of demeanour and ‘holy living’:

‘[...] that all his werkys savoured hevenly ffor what so evir (Abbotsford MS lines 23–26)
 he did charitte bigan his werk and mekenesse ended it

wherefore the fame of his demenyng and of his holy
living diffoundid was •’

Pope, Rome, and Privileges

Regarding Aldhelm’s visit to Rome, all three documents agree. The wording of the MS 72 and Caxton are identical in claiming that the Pope purposefully sent for Aldhelm due to his holiness. The Abbotsford MS makes the same claim but worded differently. The life of Saint Aldhelm is the only life in the MS 72 that has suffered such damage. This occurrence is noted by square brackets. The Abbotsford MS and Caxton have not suffered such a fate. It is noteworthy that the Abbotsford MS gives detail of the Pope’s name as ‘Sergius’ (line 30).

‘[...] and when the [pope] herde of hys
greet holynesse he sent for hym to
come to Rome’ (MS 72, lines 13–15)

[...] & whan
ƿ(the) pope herde of hys grete holiness he sen//
te for hym to come to Rome. (Caxton, lines 10–12)

‘...worshipfully received by the Pope which that tyme was
clepid Sergius for the opinion of his hooly living’ (Abbotsford MS, lines 29–30)

It is at this point that comparison with the Abbotsford MS will be temporarily suspended, as the MS 72 and Caxton offer further content regarding length of stay in Rome and the receiving of privileges from the Pope, which do not appear in the Abbotsford MS. Both texts state that the Pope was pleased with his holy living, and that Aldhelm stayed with the Pope for a considerable amount of time. However, the wording differs slightly:

[...] And than the [pope] (MS 72, lines 15–18)
made full †meeke† of hym at hys
coming for longe tyme he dwellyd
there with the [pope]

[...] The Pope welcomed hym: and (Caxton, lines 13–16)
was moche gladde of hys good lyvyng.
and there he abode longe time with the
pope

Both texts then claim that Aldhelm received privileges from the Pope for his abbey in Malmesbury. The significance of these privileges given to Aldhelm is stated as being of greater import than those obtainable by bishop or king of England of their own ‘free election’, or volition. The purpose for emphasising Aldhelm being called for by the Pope, and the receiving of privileges specifically for his abbey in Malmesbury, could strongly be to highlight Aldhelm’s gravitas as a favoured English saint in the mind of the reader or listener.

[...] and he gate ful (MS 72, lines 18–24)
greet prvelagis to the howse of Mayal //
mysbury that no bysshoⁿ p of Inglaⁿ d
shulde have a doo ther nor the kyng
neyther to sette theym of theyr fre
eleaioⁿ but for to these there abbot
amongis theym self

[...] & gate full grete pryvyleges and ly // (Caxton, lines 16–22)
†beveots† to the hows of Malmesburye in ly //
che wyle that no bishop in Englonde shol //

de vysyte ne hauc to doo there ne the kyn //
ge to lette theym of theyr fre eleccyon: but
chese theyr abbot emonge the couent theȝ
self.

Both texts then follow, with three lines from Caxton and five lines from the MS 72, to say that Aldhelm was overjoyed with the privileges. It is also reiterated that Aldhelm lived in Rome for a considerable time whilst living a holy life. The Abbotsford MS offers additional content regarding Aldhelm's habit of always carrying with him objects necessary for the saying of Mass while on pilgrimage. Yet, it is not clear whether these are the privileges received from the Pope. Again, the Abbotsford MS emphasises Aldhelm's holy qualities rather than reasons for gravitas:

[...] the use and

(Abbotsford MS, lines 31–35)

custome of this hooly abbot was that whider so evir
e went on pilgrimage he had alwey caryed with hym
Al the ornamentus the which longen to a preste to seyn
with a messe

Chasuble Miracle

All three texts relate the miracle of the chasuble that occurred while Aldhelm was in Rome. He was saying Mass in the Church of John Lateran and removed his chasuble only to find there was no-one there to hold it for him. He then saw a sunbeam streaming in through the window of the church, and proceeded to hang the vestment upon it. Each text echoes the other regarding the location and saying of Mass. The MS 72 and Caxton both state that the miracle took place at the end of Mass. Whereas, this is not mentioned in the Abbotsford MS:

[...] And when

(MS 72, lines 30–32)

the messe was doone there wold no
man take his vestement fro hym'

[...] and whan the Masse (Caxton, lines 26–29)

was don: there was no man that wold ta //
ke hys chesyble fro hym at the ende of the
Masse.

Regarding the sunbeam, the Abbotsford MS exclusively relates that it appeared ‘suddenly’. The MS 72 and Caxton claim he ‘saw’ a sunbeam, suggesting that it was noticed rather than a remarkable happening. The Abbotsford MS claims that as Aldhelm let go of his chasuble the sunbeam came in through the window and held it up. It remained there for quite some time until ‘some man’ took it down. This statement suggests that it was not Aldhelm who removed the chasuble:

[...] he lete it goon oute of his hande weuyng that so^{me} (Abbotsford MS, lines 39–42)
man had taken it of hym sodernly a beem of the si^{me}
came in at an hole of a glasse wyndowe helde up the
chaucible a gode while til su^{me} man come and toke it

It is also to be noted that the Abbotsford MS states that the sunbeam came in through a ‘hole’ in the glass window. This is echoed in the MS 72, yet not mentioned in Caxton. Also, unlike the Abbotsford MS, the MS 72 and Caxton both state that Aldhelm hung the chasuble on the sunbeam himself:

[...] & than he so the sunne beme shyne (MS 72, lines 33–37)
in at an hole in the glas wyndowe
and he hynge his chesible there on
that al men might se thye greet
miracle

[...] And thenne he saw the sonne beme (Caxton, lines 29–32)
shyne through the glasse window / & hen (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)
ge hys chesyble theron wherof alle the pe //

ple merveyllled gretely of that miracle /

Regarding the congregation's reaction to this miracle, the Abbotsford MS states that the chasuble was 'held up a good while' by the sunbeam, which suggests it hung there long enough to be both witnessed and acknowledged. However, the MS 72 claims that the gesture was a deliberate action of Aldhelm's to attract his congregation to the miracle: 'he hung his chasuble thereon that all men might see thy great miracle'. Caxton further add the reaction of the audience specifically by stating that 'he hung his chasuble thereon whereof all the people marvelled greatly at that miracle'.

Again, there is a contrast between the Abbotsford MS and the other two documents. While the Abbotsford MS focuses upon the miracle itself being effectively taken out of Aldhelm's hands and performed by a supernatural force, the MS 72 and Caxton Unlike the Abbotsford MS, the MS 72 and Caxton both state that Aldhelm hung the chasuble on the sunbeam himself: claim that, almost as a party trick, Aldhelm performed the miracle himself, and as with any egotistical performer made sure that everyone noticed this marvel he had performed. This almost tabloidesque account is in stark contrast to the Abbotsford MS emphasizing the holy event rather than the conduit specifically.

The word 'miracle' is used in all three texts referring to this event. Moreover, all three state that the chasuble was taken to Aldhelm's monastery at Malmesbury, with the Abbotsford MS claiming it to be a 'relic'. Unlike the Abbotsford MS, the MS 72 and Caxton both state that Aldhelm hung the chasuble on the sunbeam himself: further add that it remained there at the time those texts were written in the fifteenth century, however, it could be that they are simply echoing Faricius and William of Malmesbury's similar claim rather than it being a fact. The MS 72 and Caxton both state that Aldhelm hung the chasuble on the sunbeam himself: is to state the colour of the vestment is purple. This is not mentioned in the Abbotsford MS:

[...] thereof the which chaucible was afterward kept (Abbotsford MS lines: 43–44)

preciously as for a relike in monastio meduliensi' (last two words underlined in red)

in remembrance of the seid miracle

[...] and the same chesyple

(MS 72, lines: 37–39)

ys yet at Malalmesbury the colour

there of is pirpil

[...] &

(Caxton BL, lines: 3 –34)

the same chesyble is yet at Malmesbury /

the colour therof is purple

The highlighting of the specific detail of the colour of the vestment clearly demonstrates that a significant, if not the major, source for both the MS 72 and Caxton is William of Malmesbury as he also highlights the colour of the chasuble. However, William also gives specific detail, claiming the garment to be red with ornate decoration in gold, even describing its remarkable length indicating Aldhelm's markedly tall stature.

Such discrepancy in the description of the colour of the garment may possibly be due to deterioration of fabric and dye from its seventh-century creation to its fifteenth-century copying with so-called personal observation, eight-hundred years plus the condition in which it may have been kept could have had a significant effect upon its state of preservation. Yet, this also begs a question regarding the physical condition of the chasuble at William's time in the twelfth century, still five hundred years after the event of the miracle.

Was the garment witnessed at its revered place in Malmesbury Abbey by any of the writers? Quite possibly William, somewhat unlikely the anonymous author of the MS 72 or Caxton. Therefore, to what extent are these three fifteenth-century Middle English accounts of Saint Aldhelm in the *Golden Legend* dedicated copies of original sources, albeit with certain omissions, anomalies, or even embellishments, or should they be viewed more as in and of their time? The occurrence of references to the abbey at Malmesbury is notably frequent, particularly with reference to relics held there. This prominence can both raise awareness of the site for the reader or listener, plus encourage pilgrimage to view the relics.

Baby Miracle

Of the three fifteenth century texts, mention of the account of the baby miracle appears only in the Abbotsford MS. It does, however, appear in both Faricius and William of

Malmesbury. No account of such an event appears in Bede. As can be seen in the Abbotsford MS, the Pope's reputation was in danger of diminishing regarding the birth of a child to an unmarried woman of the Pope's court.

It happnd also (Abbotsford MS, lines: 45–48)
about the same tyme the popis fame to ben hurt in Rome
by the birthe of a childe whos modir was nat cured by
an hnsbonde and was familiar in the popis court'

According to the Abbotsford MS, the child of nine days old was asked by Aldhelm if the Pope was his father. This is in complete agreement with both Faricius and William:

[...] hevyng blissid Aldelme admired the childe but nyne day //(Abbotsford MS, lines 49–50)
es of age that he should tellen who bigat hym and anoon

The child then comforted the Pope by saying that he was not his father. Moreover, the baby then went on to praise the Pope's holiness. This is an echo of Faricius and William:

'the childe comfid the Pope seid that he was nat hys (Abbotsford MS, lines: 51–54)
fadir wherthough anoon the infante cesfid this man //
hys holynesse was so grete and so exceptable in the syght
of god'

Return to England

The Abbotsford MS does not refer to Aldhelm's return to England, and the privileges he brought with him from the Pope. Moreover, there is no reference to the King acknowledging said privileges. The MS 72 and Caxton however, do:

[...] and w(ithi)n

(MS 72, lines 39–43)

a while aftyr he come in to Ingleⁿ d
ayeen and brought with hym ful
greet p^rivilegie undyr the [popes]
seel of leed

[...] After he came agayn in to England

(Caxton BL, lines 35–37)

and brought wyth hym many pryuyleges
under the Popes seal

As can be seen above, both texts are extremely similar in wording and content, with the added detail in the MS 72 of the Pope's seal being made of lead. The following lines regarding presenting the privileges to the King for corroboration are equally similar, with the exception of added information in the MS 72 in the form of King Athelred as well as King Ine. Both texts agree that the king confirmed all that the Pope had granted specifically for the house at Malmesbury.

[...] and when he come to

(MS 72, lines 43–47)

the kynge Ine and to Athelred þat
confermyd alle that the Pope hadde
granⁿ tyd to his howse of Mayalmysbu//
ry

[...] whyche after king

(Caxton BL, lines 37–39)

Ine confermed alle y^t (that) the Pope hadde graⁿ u(n) (note: the '//' is missing to indicated broken word)

ted to the hows of Malmesburye

Both the MS 72 and Caxton are identical in stating the year of this event as ‘about’ 706AD:

[...] This Was a bouthe the yeare of (MS 72, lines 47–48)
owre lorde • vij^c • & vj •

‘[...] this was (Caxton BL, lines 39–40)
about the yere of our lorde. Vij. C. and vi’

There are a further eight events in the life of Aldhelm which occur in the MS 72 and Caxton, yet do not, however, appear in the Abbotsford MS, which, instead, continues with singularly promoting Aldhelm’s holiness. Therefore, this comparison momentarily suspends discussion regarding the content of the Abbotsford MS, whilst an examination of the events portrayed in the MS 72 and Caxton is pursued. The events present are as follows:

- ❖ Treatise on the date of Easter
- ❖ Aldhelm becomes confessor to Brightwolde, archbishop of Canterbury
- ❖ Dover tempest miracle
- ❖ Final years
- ❖ Deathbed curse and blessing
- ❖ Shrine miracles
- ❖ Egwine’s pilgrimage to Rome in chains
- ❖ Translation of body

Treatise on the Date of Easter

During the period of Aldhelm, the date of Easter was under contention regarding the following of the Celtic calendar or that of Rome. Bede tells us:

While Aldhelm was still a priest, and abbot of the monastery known as Maelduib’s Town, he was directed by a synod of his own people to write a notable treatise against the errors of the Britons in observing Easter at the wrong time and doing other things

contrary to the orthodoxy and unity of the Church. By means of this book he persuaded many of those Britons who were subject to the West Saxons to conform to the Catholic observance of the Lord's Resurrection.²²

As can be seen below, both the MS 72 and Caxton attest to Bede's claim regarding dispute about the date of Easter as their content and wording demonstrate in almost identical fashion: 'And then there was a great variance among bishops of this land for the holding of Easter day':

[...] And than ther (MS 72, lines 48–51)
was a greet variance amonge the
bysshoppis of this londe for the
holdyng of Esterday

*And in that tyme there fyll a grete va // (Caxton, lines 41–43)
ryaunce amonge the bisshpes of this lon //
De: for the holdyng of ester daye.

As Bede states that Aldhelm wrote a treatise on the date of Easter, so too do the MS 72 and Caxton acknowledge this by stating Aldhelm 'made a book' regarding this issue:

[...] but he made (MS 72, lines 5–53)
a boke that alle men schuld ††
for ever when Esterday shal be

But St Aldelme made a book that alle men shold (Caxton, lines 44–45)
knowe for ever whan ester daye shall falle

²² Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 298.

Both texts follow with familiar reiteration that the book is ‘yet at Malmesbury’. With the equal acknowledgement that an abbey was founded there by Aldhelm in the name of Our Lady. It is noteworthy that this is the first time Aldhelm is referred to as a ‘saint’, as seen in Caxton line 44 above.

[...] the whiche boke ys yet at Mayalmys// (MS 72, lines 54–56)
bury and this abbey he fou^r did in
the worshi^p of owre lady •

the whyche book is yet at Malmesburye: & (Caxton, lines 46–48)
that abbay he dyde do make in y^c (that) worship
of our blessed lady:

Aldhelm Becomes Confessor to Brightwolde, Archbishop of Canterbury

In both the MS 72 and Caxton, Brightwolde is mentioned both by name and by status:

[...] And (MS 72, lines 56–58)
Brightwolde that was than arche//
Bissho^p of Caⁿturbury’

[...] & bryghtwold y^c (that) was (Caxton, lines 4–49)
archebisshop of Canterbury:

Although the spelling of Brightwolde differs slightly, it is clear that both texts refer to the same person. Both texts refer to Brightwolde sending for Aldhelm to be his counsellor. Yet, only the MS 72 states that this was because the archbishop had heard of Aldhelm’s holy living:

[...] herde of (MS 72, lines 58–60)
Aldelynes holy levynge & sent for
hym to be hys cou(n)ˉ seylour

[...] and he sente (Caxton, lines 49–50)
for hym to hys counceyllour

Both texts conclude this section by stating how mutually beneficial each was to the other in both holy living and joyfulness:

[...] and there (MS 72, lines 60–63)
they levyd to gedyr many a day in
ful holy lyf and ful joyfull were
eyther of other *

[...] & they lyved (Caxton., lines 50–53)
to gyder full holyly longe tyme.
*And eche was ful glad and joyefull of
Other.

Dover Tempest Miracle

According to the MS 72 and Caxton, following Aldhelm's calling to Brightwolde, a miraculous event occurred during his stay. The MS 72 and Caxton state that they were both at the seaside at Dover, Caxton mentions they were by Dover castle, when they noted a merchant ship not far from land:

[...] And in a day as (MS 72, lines 63–66)
they were on the see syde by Dover
there seylid a shiˉp with marchanˉ //

dyse not fer fro the londe

[...] And on a daye as they stood at the (Caxton, lines 53–56)
see syde by dover castell / they sawe a shyp
laden wyth marchaundyse not ferre fro
them.

Aldhelm called to them to see if they had any merchandise on the ship belonging to the Church to sell. Both texts openly refer to Aldhelm as a saint:

[...] seynt Aldelyne clepid to theym to (MS 72, lines 67–70)
wyte yf they hadde any orname^t
that longid to the holy churche with in
shi^p for to selle

[...] And saynt Aldelme called to them (Caxton, lines 56–58)
to wyte yf they had ony ornament Iⁿ ogyng
to holy churche within theyr shyp to selle:

Again, the wording of the MS 72 and Caxton are very similar. The following lines tell us that the merchants were in scorn and disdain of Aldhelm, claiming that they did not believe he had the power to purchase such items, and so sailed away:

[...] but the mer// (MS 72, lines 70–74)
chandys had scorne of hym & þougt
that he was not of power to bye suche
thyngis as they hadde & so deptyd
fro thys holy man

[...] But y^c (that) marchauntes had dysdayne of hȳ (hym) (Caxton, lines 59–62)
& thought he was not of power to bye su //
che thynges as they hadde to selle & depar //
ted fro the holy man /

It is at this juncture that the miracle of the tempest is recounted:

[...] but anoon fyl (MS 72, lines 74 – 76)
on them so greet tempest that they
were in point to be loste •

[...] but anon fyll on thê (them) (Caxton, lines 62 – 64)
so grete a tempest: that they were in paryll
for to perysshe.

It begins with the onslaught of the tempest being so great that the sailors were about to be lost, and in peril of perishing. At this stage, the cause of the tempest is not indicated by either text. Yet the following lines of each text strongly suggest, in the minds of the sailors, that it was caused by Aldhelm for their derision of him, and that they must pray for deliverance:

[...] and than (MS 72, lines 76 -81)
oone of them seide we suffer this
greet trouble fore we took in sfoye
the wordys of the holy man & yfor
lete us all desire hym to pray for
us to our lorde •

[...] And thenne one of thê (them) said (Caxton, lines 64 -68)
we suffer this trouble be cause we had dys (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)
dayne of the words of yonder holy man /
And therefor lete us all mekely desire hym

to praye for us to our lord Jhesu cryste.

The finale to this miracle account appears to give it a uniqueness separate from other numerous tempest miracles, by both texts, almost identically, stating that the merchants gave Aldhelm a ‘fayre’ Bible, which is yet at Malmesbury. So far, there are three occasions where items of significant holy interest are ‘yet at Malmesbury’, the privileges from the Pope, the chasuble, and now the Bible.

While the MS 72 and Caxton are giving accounts of the treatise on the date of Easter, archbishop Brightwolde’s calling of Aldhelm to be his counsellor, and the tempest miracle at Dover, none of these are mentioned in the Abbotsford MS. Instead, florid references to Aldhelm’s holiness and saintly qualities abound. This exposition of Aldhelm’s virtues begin in earnest at the top of column B, folio 110^f. The bottom of the page of both columns A and B have been cut and removed by at least two inches, which makes it unclear if it was decoration or text that was removed. The final sentence in column A is:

[...] oo tyme a beem which was ordeyned to (Abbotsford MS, lines 54 - 55)
ben in the church of his monasterie and was to shorte

The first and second lines of column B begin:

[...] ynough thus and many othir wises the life of this (Abbotsford MS, lines 56 – 57)
blissid man [...]

It is somewhat ambiguous to be sure if ‘to shorte’ is immediately followed by ‘ynough thus’ without text missing in between. Aldhelm’s saintly qualities are evident in the use of terminology that is unambiguous in its meaning:

[...] the life of this (Abbotsford MS, lines 57 – 59)
blissid man was so redolent in virtues that all the honours
of god was fulfilled with the odour of the opinion of

the fame of his gode name

The use of the word 'odour' is often used with reference to Saintliness. For example, Mary and the odour of roses. Such odiferous qualities are designed to point to sainthood. Further saintly qualities are evident in reference to diligent abstinence of food, drink, and sleep which Aldhelm encouraged his subjects to follow:

[...] he excited his subiectis to the same forme of h // (Abbotsford MS, lines 61 – 63)
vyng of mete drynke he was right abstinent
and to slepe he was ful loth more than nature affid

As can be seen above, Aldhelm was most occupied with reading and praying despite surrounding circumstances from peace to the need to flee. It is also noted that he was a lover of patience, and a follower of gentleness, 'mansuetude'. This conviction is reiterated in the final statement:

[...] there was no thying (Abbotsford MS, lines 67 – 69)
in hym neither worde nor werk but it savoured goste //
ly and godly

There follows a comparison of all three texts of the final years of Aldhelm's life. As Aldhelm's death is recorded as the year 709AD, each of the time references in the manuscripts appear to be correct. The Abbotsford MS states that about the year of Our Lord seven hundred and five, Aldhelm was chosen to govern one of the two divided parts of a diocese. Bede tells us that after the death of the most holy bishop Haeddi of the West Saxons in 705AD, the diocese was divided between Aldhelm and Daniel. Bede states that Aldhelm '[...] administered it with great energy for four years'.²³

Both the MS 72 and Caxton state that this occurred four years before Aldhelm's death. The MS 72 states that Aldhelm was made bishop of Worcester, yet it must be noted

²³ Bede, *Ecclesiastic History*, p. 298.

that this has been crossed out. Caxton refers to Aldhelm as becoming bishop of Dorset. Caxton further states that his ordination as bishop was by the archbishop of Canterbury and other bishops. The MS 72 names these as Brightwolde, and Saint Egwine, Bishop of Worcester.

The final eight lines of the Abbotsford MS are partial, as the second half of each line has been removed as a whole section, that being the illuminated initial letter from the previous page of the life of St Urban. Thus, the missing text is marked with double square brackets. Aldhelm's death, as far as can be seen due to damage, is announced in the Abbotsford MS as:

‘[...] and by angels handis [[]] (Abbotsford MS, lines 77 – 78)
the hevenly habitude [...]’

Finishing with:

[...] fully buried in his monasterie • (Abbotsford MS, line 80)

MS72 is less forthcoming, with:

[...] ful worshipfully brought on (MS 72, lines 91 – 92)
erthe•

Whereas, Caxton states that within a short time after his ordination as bishop he died and was buried at Malmesbury. Whilst no more information is offered by the Abbotsford MS, the MS 72 and Caxton offer further accounts. Below are two similar accounts of Saint Egwine, being troubled after visiting Aldhelm's tomb, shackled himself with chains, and in great pain journeyed on pilgrimage to Rome, where he was granted pardon. However, the sin to which Egwine refers is not mentioned.

Here again the MS 72 and Caxton are both in agreement both with content and with wording. On his deathbed, Aldhelm at once curses anyone who breaks the privileges bestowed upon Malmesbury from the Pope, and promises god's blessing and his to those who protect the house. Both the MS 72 and Caxton relate that after a considerable, yet not specified, time, Aldhelm was translated to a 'worshipful' and 'fully rich' shrine. Both account that the lord showed many great miracles daily for Aldhelm. Both texts then finish with a different prayer, Caxton having the more dramatic final flourish:

[...] Wherefor oure lord be pre// (MS 72, lines 108–109)
sid worlde with owte ende • Amen •

[...] Then (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)

(Caxton, lines 92 – 97)

ne late us praye saynt Aldelme to pray for
us unto our lord god that we may in this
wretched vale of this world soo bewaylle
our syn^{er} es / & amende our lyvyng y^t (that) we may
come to everlasting lyf in heven. Amen.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of a detailed comparison of the life of Saint Aldhelm as it appears in the three fifteenth-century Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea* has revealed a number of similarities, particularly in the case of the Lambeth Palace Manuscript 72 (1438) and the British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.11 c.16 Caxton’s printed edition as the *Golden Legende*, imprint date (1498). Whilst the Abbotsford House Manuscript (1443–1449) contains similarities its focus appears to be more upon the nature of Saint Aldhelm’s holiness. In each of the documents content from the original sources appear, yet their choices appear selective. The following chapter will analyse these findings and consider why the contents present themselves thus, and to establish the nature of holiness revealed in the texts in the life of Saint Aldhelm.

Chapter Seven

Analysis of the Nature of Holiness Specific to the Life of Saint Aldhelm in Three Middle English Versions of The *Legenda aurea*

Introduction

Chapter Four identified key events relevant to the nature of Aldhelm's holiness in the original sources of his life. In the comparison of the texts, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* [the Ecclesiastical History of the English People] (731 AD), Faricius of Abingdon's († 1117) the *Vita S. Aldhelmi* [The Life of Saint Aldhelm], and William of Malmesbury's (1095–1143) *De gesta pontificum anglorum* [The Deeds of the Bishops of England] differences emerged regarding content and style. It is to be reiterated that only Faricius refers to his text as specifically a life of Aldhelm, *Vita Aldhelmi*.¹ Whereas, Bede merely includes him in his writing regarding bishops of the West Saxons.² Whilst briefly pointing out Aldhelm's remarkable writing, Bede's unusually non-allegorical style neither refers to Aldhelm's miracles nor his holiness. The reason for this omission, which surely would have been present in verbal accounts, is unclear as Bede offers many such occurrences regarding other saints in his chronicle. William's ample text which champions Aldhelm in his inclusion in his *De gesta pontificum anglorum* is replete with events of his patron saint's generic achievements and accounts of his miracles and holiness. The style is somewhat that of a biased biographer in matter of fact tone, fervently applauding the hearsay that he discovered of Aldhelm as he travelled England for information for his book, which, for him, was to rectify Faricius's attempt at the life of Aldhelm eighty years earlier. Unlike William, Faricius's style is florid and abounds with Aldhelm's miraculous deeds and his holiness, often applying exegesis for dramatic emphasis.

¹Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, pp. 356–382. See also, M. Winterbottom, 'An Edition of Faricius, *Vita S. Aldhelmi*', *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 15 (2005): 93–147.

² Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 298–299.

Chapter Five then followed with a detailed comparison of the transcribed content of the three fifteenth century Middle English versions of the life of Aldhelm in the *Legenda aurea*: the Abbotsford House MS (1443–1449), the Lambeth Palace MS 72 (1438), and the British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.11 c.16 Caxton’s printed edition as the *Golden Legende*, imprint date (1498). The comparison revealed much similarity between the MS 72 and Caxton, with variation of style and content in the Abbotsford MS. This chapter will begin by exploring the definition of holiness, followed by a comprehensive analysis of the findings which emerged from the codices specific to evidence of the nature of Aldhelm’s holiness therein. In the table below I have segregated the key events which appear in all, some, or one of the Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*.³

<u>Events Present in All Three Manuscripts</u>	<u>Events Present Only in the MS 72 and Caxton</u>	<u>Event Present Only in the Abbotsford MS</u>
Royal blood	Return to England	Baby miracle
Youth	Treatise on the date of Easter	
Sent to monastery	Councillor to Brightwolde Archbishop of Canterbury	
Pope, Rome, and privileges	Dover tempest miracle	
Chasuble miracle	Bishop Egwine’s pilgrimage to Rome in chains	
Holiness	Deathbed curse and blessing	
Final years	Translation of body and non-specified shrine miracles	
Ending		

Column 1 shows there are eight events which appear in all three manuscripts. Column 2 identifies the seven events which appear only in the MS 72 and Caxton. Column 3 has one event which only appears in one manuscript, the Abbotsford MS. From the sixteen events I

³ See Appendix B for a comparison table identifying in which versions the events are present.

identified in the content of the life of Saint Aldhelm, I have selected for analysis specific references to the nature of Aldhelm's holiness, the essence of his saintliness revealed in the texts. In particular, to consider why certain events that are in the original sources do not match, or even appear in, the fifteenth century versions of Saint Aldhelm specific to the *Legenda aurea*. Also, to consider why the three manuscripts are occasionally inconsistent, both with the primary sources and each other, with regard to style and content.

The nature of holiness

In her seminal work on miracles, Benedicta Ward points to Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD) as offering the bedrock of medieval thought on miracles as evidence of the nature of holiness.⁴ Augustine's thought is revealed in his writings of *De Civitate dei* [The City of God], *De trinitate* [On the Trinity], *De Utilitate credendi* [On the Profit of Believing], and *De Genesis ad litteram* [The Literal Interpretation of Genesis]. Augustine's philosophy focuses on the singular miracle of creation, which is then echoed in the resurrection of Christ. 'For we cannot deny that many miracles have in fact occurred which attest to the one, great and saving miracle of Christ's ascension into heaven with the flesh in which he rose again'.⁵ Ward describes Augustine's philosophy of the miraculous as evident in 'three levels of wonder'. The first level of wonder is the wonder evident in daily acts of creation. The second level is apparent when those who witness such a manifestation are in a state of awe, their own simple ignorance of the world allowing them insight into the miraculous phenomena. The third level of wonder involves the supernatural, not contrary to nature, but beyond its confines. This occurrence involves a wonder which is unfathomable, a truly spiritual experience.⁶ Simon Yarrow affirms that 'Augustine saw the saints as enjoying a particular role in boosting the Christian faith with a reminder of God's power, manifest in the form of miracles'.⁷

⁴ Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000 – 1215*, The Middle Ages, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p. 3.

⁵ William Babcock, trans., *The Works of Saint Augustine a Translation for the 21st Century: The City of God (De Civitate Dei) XI–XXII*, (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013), pp.505–517. See also, B. Dombart, A. Kaib eds., *De Civitate dei*, 2 vols, (Turnholt: Brepols, 1955). W.J. Mountain, F. Glorie eds., *De trinitate*, 2 vols, (Turnholt: Brepols 1968). J. Zycha, ed., *De Genesis Litteram*, (Prague: CSEL, 1894).

⁶ Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*, p. 4.

⁷ Simon Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), pp. 1–23.

Events of supernatural wonder that are beyond the confines of nature, as defined as the third level, are commonplace in medieval lives of saints, such as healing miracles at shrines of saint.⁸ As an example, in Bede's original account of the life of seventh-century Saint Oswald he attest to a miracle at Oswald's tomb, which involves a young boy who suffered from ague with a terrible fever.⁹ A monk advised the boy to sit at Saint Oswald's tomb and remain there until the fever subsided. Bede emphasises that at the intercession of such a saint, who had also been king, the fever was in great fear of the saint's tomb and rapidly left the boy.

Whilst shrines of saints demonstrated miraculous intervention, objects and places related to the saint, by extension, also possessed supernatural qualities.¹⁰ For example, the relics of the saint often housed within the shrine, water having been used to wash the saint's bones, the location of an abbey or church, or the site of a miraculous event. In the case of an object, an item of ecclesiastical import, such as a vestment or Bible, with supernatural significance to the saint would hold such a powerful spiritual presence that pilgrims and petitioners would be drawn to them. Examples of Augustine's third level of wonder in the miraculous in the life of Aldhelm will be referred to later.

Ward indicates that the eleventh century saw a shift from Augustine's model, in the definition of the miraculous, to include embodiment of the Divine, pointing to Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) as a key contributor.¹¹ Rather than the third level of wonder describing indirect or bestowed power of a preternatural nature, the Divine is directly present in a miraculous event. Examples of such are the sacraments, in particular the sacrament of the Eucharist during Mass: 'In this period the sacrament of the Eucharist in particular began to be regarded as a miracle in a different sense'.¹²

⁸ Cynthia Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early Medieval Saint's Shrines', *Speculum*, 74: 4 (1997): 1079–1106.

⁹ Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 162.

¹⁰ C. M. Woolgar, 'What Makes Things Holy? The Senses and Material Culture in the Late Middle Ages', in Robin Macdonald, Emilie K. M. Murphy, and Elizabeth L. Swann, eds., *Sensing the Sacred in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 60–78.

¹¹ Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*, p. 4. Regarding Anselm see also, William M. Aird, 'Saint Anselm of Canterbury and Charismatic Authority', *Religions*, 5.1 (2013): 90–108. See also, Alex J. Novikoff 'Anselm, Dialogue, and the Rise of Scholastic Disputation', *Speculum*, 86. 2, (2011): 387–481.

¹² Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*, p. 13.

By the fifteenth century, holiness as depicting sainthood had moved from being defined by martyrdom, as in early Christianity, to an almost nostalgic reflection of saintly perfection that emphasised the ethereal quality of sanctity. ‘To write hagiography in the fifteenth century is also, necessarily, to write history, and to desire Anglo-Saxon saint’s spiritual perfections [...]’.¹³ As such, certain topoi could appear as a common thread reflecting the past via exegesis in contemporary events throughout narrative of medieval sainthood.¹⁴

The nature of Aldhelm’s holiness is evident in all three manuscripts both explicitly, in the occurrences of the word ‘holy’ or ‘holiness’ in direct references to Aldhelm in the texts, and implicitly in the saint’s supernatural qualities evident in accounts of his miracles. Explicit reference to Aldhelm’s holiness in the direct use of the word ‘holy’ or ‘holiness’ occurs a mere four times in the Abbotsford text, yet the manuscript is replete with eloquent descriptions of his holy persona, for example, lines 53 to 57 offer: ‘the life of this blissid man was so redolent in virtues that all the hous of god was fulfilled with the odour of the opinion of the fame of his gode name’ [the life of this blessed man was so redolent in virtues that all the house of god was fulfilled with the odour of the opinion of the fame of his good name]. the MS 72 contains the maximum nine occurrences of the word ‘holy’ or ‘holiness’, with Caxton’s later version containing six. Caxton having fewer occurrences may simply be due to the MS 72 being handwritten, and Caxton being the first printed version of the *Legenda aurea*. Caxton employs a number of abbreviations, not for the word ‘holy’, but such as ‘y^c (that)’ and ‘thê (them)’, this could indicate the limitations of print regarding type space and strict column width.¹⁵ The nature of Aldhelm’s holiness is further implied by accounts of his humble yet evangelic persona, particularly evident in the Abbotsford MS.

I have determined two principal areas denoting the nature of holiness in the life of Aldhelm, namely the performance of miracles, and his early education and elevation to the role of bishop. Within these two areas, specific themes within the narrative will be explored relating to place and pilgrimage, audience and performance, sacred objects, and sacraments

¹³ Cynthia Turner Camp, *Anglo-Saxon Saint’s Lives as History Writing in Late Medieval England*, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewster, 2015), p. 23.

¹⁴ Antonio Gransden, *Legends, Traditions and History in Medieval England*, (London: Hambledon Press, 1992), p. 35.

¹⁵ A.S.G. Edwards ‘Representing the Middle English Manuscript’ in Derek Pearsall, ed., *New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies*, (York: York Medieval Studies, 2000), pp. 65–79. See also, Joseph A. Dane, *What is a Book? The Study of Early Printed Books*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012). Also, Mark Bland, *A Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

and rituals. In the three *Legenda aurea* versions of the life of Aldhelm I will consider why such elements are included in each text, and others are omitted, and compare with the primary source material, Bede (eighth century), Faricius of Abingdon and William of Malmesbury (twelfth century), and possible antecedents.

References to the nature of holiness present in Aldhelm's life are apparent in his performances of three miracles, which I have termed the baby miracle, the chasuble miracle, and the tempest miracle. Notably, however, each miracle does not appear in all three documents. The baby miracle is solely accounted for in Abbotsford; the chasuble miracle appears in all three, and the tempest miracle is in both the Lambeth Palace MS 72 and Caxton, yet, not in the Abbotsford MS.

Bede's narrative can be discounted as sources for the inclusion of miracles performed by Aldhelm as he fails to include any miracles in his description of the life of Aldhelm in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*.¹⁶ Possibly the verbal sources Bede had for Aldhelm's life may well have not include accounts of his miracles, plus no previous texts of the life of Saint Aldhelm existed. Bede's sources, conceivably visiting clergy of varying status, would have focused on highlighting Aldhelm's literary skills and ecclesiastical elevation, including his appointed diocese location for Bede's records.

It is important to note the title of Bede's chapter which involves Aldhelm: 'The South Saxons receive as their bishops Eadbert and Ealla, and the West Saxons Daniel and Aldhelm. The writings of Aldhelm [c. A.D. 705]'.¹⁷ Clearly, Bede's focus in his brief chapter is upon the recording of ecclesiastical appointments and commenting on Aldhelm's renowned writings.

Yet, seemingly paradoxically, Bede does include many miracles attributed to other saints in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*. For example, Ethelburga (605–647), Queen of Kent who married King Edwin of Northumbria, and later became Abbess of Barking. Bede states that he obtained information regarding the miracles attributed to Ethelburga directly from a book: 'And whosoever wishes to read about the wonderful things that happened there will find in the book which is the source of my information [...]. It would not be

¹⁶ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 298–99.

¹⁷ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 298.

right to omit mention of a miraculous cure which this same book records'.¹⁸ The miracle involved the curing of a blind woman whilst she was praying in the cemetery of the convent at Barking where the holy Abbess was buried.

Therefore, Bede, by his own admission, had a written source to refer to for information regarding the life of Ethelburga. Nevertheless, Bede's brief written account of ecclesiastical and literary occurrences in the life of Aldhelm must have solely involved his sources as from verbal transmission, as no earlier literature regarding the saint was in evidence. Yet, Bede, when applauding Aldhelm's own writings, such as *De virginitate* [On Virginity] writings, clearly had access to those documents, thereby being privileged to a certain amount of insight into the man's holy nature via his writing. For example, Bede states: 'He also wrote an excellent book On Virginity, [...] (he was) extremely well read both in biblical and general literature'.¹⁹

All three miracles in the life of Aldhelm which appear in the fifteenth century codices, the Abbotsford MS, the MS 72, and Caxton, are present in both Faricius of Abingdon's († 1117) Latin prose version the *Vita S. Aldhelmi*,²⁰ and William of Malmesbury's (1095–1143) account in his *De gesta pontificum anglorum*.²¹ The codices of Faricius of Abingdon and William of Malmesbury are the sole primary sources for the life of Saint Aldhelm after Bede.

William justifies his inclusion of miracles specific to Aldhelm in his text as his chapter 212 is entitled 'The Justification for Recording Miracles Based on Hearsay'.²² Here William states 'For I shall only include those miracles which have gained universal support from ancient times right down to today'.²³ William further qualifies his statement by declaring 'God has implanted them in the minds of men instead of on paper, so that the saint's miraculous deeds should not be forgotten and wasted'.²⁴ This acceptance of oral accounts of miracles performed by Aldhelm could also be a pointed remark at Bede's written account, it being the first. Bede's life of Aldhelm is devoid of miracles, yet is replete with them in the lives of other saints, most notably Oswald.

¹⁸ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 221.

¹⁹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 299.

²⁰ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, pp. 356–382. See also M. Winterbottom, 'An Edition of Faricius, *Vita S. Aldhelmi*', *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 15 (2005): 93–147.

²¹ Preest, *Gesta* pp. 223–65.

²² Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 243.

²³ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 243.

²⁴ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 243.

The MS 72 and Caxton both allude to miracles which occurred at the shrine of Aldhelm but do not offer further detail, Abbotsford does not include any shrine miracles nor are they alluded to. Instead the manuscript ends with ‘and by angels handis [[]] the heavenly habitude and his [[]]passion of his brethren fece [[]]fully buried in his monasterie • ‘and by angels hands [[]] the heavenly habitude and his [[]]passion of his brethren face [[]] fully buried in his monastery •’. The [[]] symbol indicates that the right-hand side of column B at the end of the column relating to the life of Saint Aldhelm a section of the folio has been cut out.

On close inspection it appears to be in order to remove the illuminated initial from the previous saint’s life on the reverse of the page. Therefore, only a partial script remains at the end of the life of Aldhelm. However, suffice to ascertain that the final line informs that he was ‘buried in his monastery’ The ‘•’ after the word monastery clearly indicates the end of the account. Moreover, clearly the life of Elentherie follows immediately after in the same column.

The MS 72 most probably used either Faricius’s or William of Malmesbury’s twelfth century accounts of Aldhelm’s life, or a combination of both, as its source because both give detailed accounts of miracles at the shrine. Caxton could possibly have used them as extra sources to the *Legenda aurea* that he states he used for his *Golden Legende*, that of Voragine’s original Latin Vulgate the *Legenda aurea*, Jean de Vignay’s translation of the *Legenda aurea* into French prose as Aldhelm is not included in these texts.²⁵ Yet, it is tempting to suggest, at this juncture, that the MS 72 (1438) version could have been one of Caxton’s sources, as both texts are remarkably similar, plus, the print version did not appear until 1484.

The Lambeth Palace MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

And many daies
thereafter he was translatyd & put
worshipful shryne • Where our (line 105)
lord shewith dayly many a greet
myracle for hys holy confessor seynt

²⁵ Manfred Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, new series 6 (Leeds: University of Leeds Press, 1974), pp. viii-x.

Aldelyne •

*And many days
thereafter he was translated and put
worshipful shrine. Where our
Lord showeth daily many a great
miracle for his holy confessor saint
Aldhelm.*

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

And

whan he hadlaen longe in y^c (that) erthe he was
tra⁻ slated and layed in a full ryche shrine (line 90)
where as our lord sheweth dayly for his ho (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)
ly seruaunte many fayr myracles.

And

*when he had lain long in that earth he was
translated and layed in a full rich shrine
where as our lord showeth daily for his ho-
ly servant many fair miracles*

In the primary sources Bede does not mention Aldhelm’s shrine, yet Faricius and William both attest to numerous miracles there. The shrine is described by William as silver and bejewelled, adorned with a gold plaque bearing Aldhelm’s name.²⁶ Both Faricius and William describe a miracle involving a marauding Viking raider, who, on seeing the ornate shrine approached it to relieve it of its jewels. Before the raider had the chance to touch the

²⁶ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 265.

shrine, he was physically repelled by the shrine with great force thus demonstrating the supernatural power of the saint.²⁷

Considering the dramatic nature of the miracle of the repelled raider at the shrine, it seems implausible that neither the MS 72 nor Caxton include it in their texts, since both mention the shrine and non-specific miracles performed there. The MS 72: 'he was translated and put worshipful shrine. Where our Lord showeth daily many a great miracle'. Caxton: 'he was translated layed in a full rich shrine whereas our lord showeth daily for his holy servant many fair miracles'. Perhaps the authors had not consulted Faricius or William as their sources, therefore, were not aware of the specific miracle.

Demonstrating reflection of the Divine is a principal determinant of a saint's holiness evidenced in medieval texts. Yet, unlike the holiness evident in the suffering of a martyr, reflection of the Divine is not so clearly apparent in the life of a Confessor. Whilst the Abbotsford MS fails to give Aldhelm a category of holiness in the title to his *vita*, the MS 72 and Caxton both anoint him in their titles as 'Confessor'. Yet, the content of the Abbotsford text demonstrates clear agreement with this claim.

The nature of holiness in Aldhelm's miracles present in the manuscripts

In order to place the miracles performed by Aldhelm in the three fifteenth century manuscripts in context, location will first be considered. Place is significant in miracle accounts as it can indicate the location of the naissance of a pilgrimage site, or have a spiritual nuance which may engender the miraculous due to the site's established sanctity.²⁸ Of the miracles of Aldhelm analysed in the three fifteenth century manuscripts, two occur in Rome, and the third takes place in Dover England, yet has significance to Aldhelm's time in Rome.²⁹ The manuscripts inform that Aldhelm is called to Rome at the behest of the then Pope Sergius I on account of his holy living and spends a considerable amount of time with the Pontiff. Therefore, to set the scene for the miracles this section begins with an analysis of Aldhelm's calling to Rome:

²⁷ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 281; Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 373.

²⁸ See Victor Turner and Turner, Edith, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, (Columbia, SC: Columbia University Press, 1978).

²⁹ See Appendix B section three 'Pope Rome and Privileges'

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

ffor abouten not oonly in Inge //

londe but also beyond the see and unto the courte of

Rome whider also he went hym self where he was

worshipfully received by the Pope which that tyme was³⁰

clepid Sergius for the opinion of his hooly living and (line 30)

god also clarified hym by myraclis werkys³¹

for about not only in Eng –

land but also beyond the sea and unto the court of

Rome wither also he went himself where he was

honourably received by the Pope which that time was

called Sergius for the opinion of his holy living and

god also glorified him by miraculous works

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

and when the [pope] herde of hys

greet holynesse he sent for hym to

come to Rome • And than the [pope] (line 15)

made full †meeke† of hym at hys

coming for longe tyme he dwellyd

there with the [pope]

³⁰ Definition of ‘worshipfully’ in Middle English is ‘honourably’. A.L. Mayhew and Walter W. Skeat, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle English from AD 1150 to 1580*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1888, p. 45.

³¹ Definition of ‘clarified’ in Middle English is ‘glorified’. A.L. Mayhew and Walter W. Skeat, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle English from AD 1150 to 1580*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1888, p. 261.

*and when the[pop]e heard of his
great holiness he sent for him to
come to Rome. And then the [pope]
made full meek of him at his
coming for long time he dwelled
there with the [pope]*

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

ƿ(the) pope herde of hys grete holiness he sen//
te for hym to come to Rome. And whan
he was there. The Pope welcomed hym: and
was moche gladde of hys good lyvyng.
and there he abode longe time with the (line 15)
pope

*the Pope heard of his great holiness he sen –
t for him to come to Rome. And when
he was there. The Pope welcomed him: and
was much glad of his good living
and there he lived a long time with the
pope*

All three manuscripts agree that, at the behest of the Pope, Aldhelm went to Rome due to his holy living. The Abbotsford MS: ‘unto the court of Rome ... he was honourably received by the Pope which that time was called Sergius for the opinion of his holy living’. The MS 72: ‘and when the [pope] heard of his great holiness he sent for him to come to Rome’. Caxton ‘the Pope heard of his great holiness he sent for him to come to Rome’. Note,

I have recorded the word ‘pope’ in the MS 72 as [pope], even though in the manuscript the word has been scratched out. It is still faintly visible.

However, the primary references of Bede (672–735), Faricius of Abingdon († 1117), and William of Malmesbury (1095–1143) differ to a certain degree on this matter. Whilst, Bede does not include Aldhelm’s visit to Rome at all in his account in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, Faricius of Abingdon substantiates the fifteenth century manuscripts’ claim of beckoning from Rome in the *Vita S. Aldhelmi* by ardently declaring that Aldhelm decided to follow the calling of the Pope, named specifically as Sergius, to Rome despite the long journey and leaving his friends, because he had always wanted to see the place of the principal apostle.³² However, according to William of Malmesbury (1095–1143), in his *Gesta pontificum anglorum*, Aldhelm’s visit to Rome appears to have a more singular purpose ‘His intention was to obtain apostolic privileges for his monasteries, especially Malmesbury’.³³ Christine Rauer supports this notion ‘Aldhelm appears to have travelled to Rome, possibly to obtain privileges from Pope Sergius I’.³⁴

From a papal and royal perspective Aldhelm also has personal knowledge, via his royal blood, of Pope Sergius I. Bede informs us that King Cadwalla (659–689), King of the West Saxons, abdicated his throne to travel on pilgrimage to Rome, Cadwalla handed over his throne to Aldhelm’s uncle, Ine, in 688.³⁵ Bede confirms the succession: ‘On Cadwalla’s departure for Rome, he was succeeded as King by Ine, who was of the blood royal’.³⁶

In great detail, Bede informs that Cadwalla was baptised by Pope Sergius I. ‘Arriving in Rome during the pontificate of Sergius, he was baptised on Holy Saturday before Easter in the year of Our Lord 689’.³⁷ Cadwalla is given the name Peter and is buried at Saint Peter’s

³² Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, pp. 356–82. See also M. Winterbottom, ‘An Edition of Faricius, *Vita S. Aldhelmi*’, *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 15 (2005): 93–147.

³³ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 248.

³⁴ Christine Rauer, ‘Pope Sergius I’s Privilege for Malmesbury’, *Leeds Studies in English*, 37 (2006): 261–81.

³⁵ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 275–76. See chapter 7 section 1 ‘Royal Blood’ where all three manuscripts mention King Ine as the brother of Aldhelm’s father.

³⁶ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 276. See also, Richard Sharpe ‘King Ceadwalla’s Roman Epitaph’ in Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe, and Andy Orchard, eds., *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge Volume 1* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 171–193.

³⁷ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 275.

in Rome. Moreover, Bede offers the lengthy epitaph that was written on Cadwalla's tomb in full:

High rank and wealth, offspring and mighty realms,
Triumphs and spoils, great nobles, cities, halls,
won by his forbears' prowess and his own -
All these great Cadwalla left for love of God.
This royal pilgrim then sought Peter's chair
to slake his thirst at Peter's vital spring.
And in his splendid, glowing light to bathe
from whom life-giving radiance ever streams.
Eager to win the prize of life renewed,
Converted, he converts his barbarous ways
And then his name itself to Peter's own
At father Sergius's word, that at the font
Christ's grace may wash him from all taint of sin
And bring him clothed in white to heaven's gate.
Great was his faith; Christ's mercy greater still
Whose secret purpose mortals may not know.
Safely he came from Britain's utmost shores
bearing his mystic gifts, to visit Rome
And in the shrine of Peter lay them down.
Now, robed in white, he moves among Christ's sheep:
His body lies entombed, his soul on high.
Wise king, his Earthly sceptre to resign,
And win from Christ in heaven his promised crown.
Cadwalla, also known as Peter, King of the Saxons, was buried here on the
twelfth day before the kalends of May.³⁸

Bede further informs that Cadwalla's successor, Aldhelm's uncle, King Ine, also ventured on pilgrimage to Rome: 'Having ruled the nation for thirty-seven years, Ine also abdicated [...]. He then set out to visit the shrines of the blessed Apostles during the pontificate of Gregory II [...] at this period many English people vied with one another in following this custom'.³⁹ Considering the chronological perspective, Ine first took the throne in 688, after the thirty-seven years mentioned the date would have been 725 when he arrived in Rome, Pope Sergius had died in 701.

³⁸ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 275–76.

³⁹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 276.

Whilst the general information offered by all three manuscripts agree regarding Aldhelm visiting Rome, Abbotsford is the only manuscript to give the name of the Pope as Sergius, however, it does not stipulate which Sergius. Perhaps it was assumed that the fifteenth century reader would know which Sergius the text refers to as he is alive at the same time as Aldhelm (639–709), Sergius I (650–701). Yet, no date is given for Aldhelm until much later in the text, the date that Aldhelm became bishop.⁴⁰ Abbotsford MS: ‘abouten the yere of our lorde seven hundred and five’. ‘About the year of our lord seven hundred and five. The MS 72 and Caxton mark this occasion as follows. The MS 72: ‘iiij yeer before he dyed’. ‘four year before he died’; Caxton: ‘four yere before hys deth’; ‘four year before his death’. Here all three manuscripts are in agreement, seven hundred and five; four years before Aldhelm’s death, as he died in 709.

Whilst both the MS 72 and Caxton also give a specific date for the return of Aldhelm to England from Rome, the Abbotsford MS does not mention this event.⁴¹ The MS 72: ‘This Was a bouthe the yeare of owre lorde • vij^c • & vj •’. Caxton: ‘this was about the yere of our lorde. Vij. C. and vi.’. Both documents stipulate ‘this was about the year of our lord 706’. Furthermore, the Abbotsford MS does not stipulate the length of time Aldhelm remains in Rome, both the MS 72 and Caxton state it as a long time. According to the MS 72: ‘for long time he dwelled there with the [pope]’. Caxton: ‘and there he lived a long time with the Pope’. Both specify Aldhelm stayed a long while ‘with the Pope’, however, considering the date of the death of Pope Sergius I, 701, Aldhelm clearly stayed on in Rome five years after the death of the Pontiff, according to date for his return to England as 706 in the MS 72 and Caxton.

The chasuble miracle happened whilst Aldhelm was saying Mass in the Church of John Lateran in Rome, the Pope’s own church as the Bishop of Rome. The Abbotsford MS appears to indicate that Aldhelm used his own priestly accoutrements to carry out this Mass, such as his own chalice and patten. This could also include his chasuble. William offers: ‘We are not sure whether he had taken this vestment with him from England, or whether he had

⁴⁰ See Chapter Seven Comparative Transcription section 11 ‘Final Years’.

⁴¹ See Chapter Seven Comparative Transcription section 6 ‘Return to England’

borrowed it there for the occasion'.⁴² The Abbotsford MS: 'wheresoever he went on pilgrimage he had always carried with him all the ornaments the which belonged to a priest to say with a Mass':

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

the use and

custome of this hooly abbot was that whider so evir

he went on pilgrimage he had alwey caryed with hym

Al the ornamentus the which longen to a preste to seyn (line 38)

with a messe

the use and

custom of this holy abbot was that wheresoever

he went on pilgrimage he had always carried with him

all the ornaments the which belonged to a priest to say

with a Mass

The Chasuble Miracle

The Chasuble miracle is the first recorded account of a miracle performed by Saint Aldhelm, which is present in both Faricius and William.⁴³ William has the event as chapter 218 'The Miracle of the Chasuble', thereby highlighting the importance of the sacred vestment.⁴⁴ The chasuble miracle is present in all three fifteenth century documents, moreover, each one declares the event by specifically identifying it as miraculous. In each text the word 'miracle' is clearly stated by name and is positioned either as the final word in the account, as in the case of the Abbotsford MS, or towards the end of the event in both the MS 72 and Caxton. Such a declaration of the miraculous is in line with the three levels of wonder highlighted

⁴² Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 250.

⁴³ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 361. Preest, trans., *Gesta* pp. 249 – 250.

⁴⁴ Preest, trans., *Gesta* pp. 249 – 250.

by Ward of Augustine's definition of the miracle. Hitherto, however, which delineation of wonder revealed in the manuscripts of this miracle is yet to be determined.

The Beginning of the Account of the Miracle

The beginning of each account of this miracle introduces four distinct areas of focus: When the miracle took place, what act Aldhelm was carrying out at the time, where the event took place, and the object of the miracle. At this juncture the reader is not aware that the text offers a prelude to a miracle. As previously stated, such reference is held until the end of the event.

The initial introduction appears to merely suggest a mundane act, Aldhelm's removal of his chasuble, albeit carried out in a remarkable and sacred setting, the Church of John Lateran in Rome. However, such a setting offers the first hint at the nature of holiness being relevant to the narrative, whilst further embedding the notion with the inclusion of Aldhelm performing the sacred ritual of the Mass. In comparing each manuscript similarities are clearly defined, yet there are certain key differences:

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

and oo tyme whan he had seid messe at (line 35)
seynt Johⁿ n Lateranence in Rome and left of his chas//
sible it happid by the providence of god that noon of
his men was redy to takkyn it of his hand

And one time when he had said Mass at

Saint John Lateran in Rome and left off his chas –

*sible it happened by the providence of god that no one of
his men was ready to take it off his hand*

The MS72 fols 244^v – 245^r

And than in a
day as he seid messe in the churche
of seynt joh̃ u latrans And when (line 30)
the messe was doone there wold no
man take his vestement fro hym

*And then in a
day as he said Mass in the church of Saint John Lateran and when
the Mass was done there would no
man take his vestment from him*

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

And on
a daye as he sayd Masse in the churche of (line 25)
saynt Johan Latrans: and whan the Masse
was don: there was no man that wold ta //
ke hys chesyble fro hym at the ende of the
Masse.

*And on
a day as he said Mass in the church of
Saint John Lateran, and when the Mass
was done, there was no man that would ta –
ke his chasuble from him at the end of the Mass.*

An examination of each of the four distinct areas of focus offered by each text reveals certain nuances:

Area of Focus 1: When the Miracle Took Place

The Abbotsford MS states: ‘And one time’, the MS 72: ‘And then in a day’, Caxton: ‘And on a day’ Each statement relates to a certain moment in time, the Abbotsford MS using ‘time’ as an anchor; both the MS 72 and Caxton’s the *Golden Legende* employ ‘day’. Each,

however, do not specify what time of the day it is: early morning, midday or evening. As the miracle later unfolds this detail would have been significant to the event taking place regarding the sunbeam.

Faricius does not mention when or what time of day the miracle occurred. William offers ‘one day’.⁴⁵ It is notable that neither offer elaboration to the build-up of the event of the miracle by describing the time of year or of day. For example, the time of year would determine the strength of the sunbeam and the time of day would see the sunbeam at a height which would allow it to shine through the window. Perhaps news of the miracle itself outweighed any such inclusion, despite both Faricius and William’s allegorical tendencies.

Area of Focus 2: What Act Aldhelm was Carrying Out at the Time

The Abbotsford MS states: ‘when he had said Mass’, the MS 72: ‘*as he said Mass*’, Caxton: ‘as he said Mass’ Initially there appears to be a slight discrepancy between the Abbotsford MS, highlighting that the Mass had ended, and the MS 72 and Caxton stating both that the event occurred during the Mass and when it was done. However, the following lines bring the MS 72 and Caxton into alignment with the Abbotsford MS claim as they state the MS 72: ‘And when the Mass was done’, Caxton: ‘and when the Mass was done’.

Faricius and William both mention that the miracle occurred when Aldhelm had finished saying Mass. Faricius states: ‘Justly and piously, in completion of the office of Mass’.⁴⁶ William declares: ‘He had done this (saying Mass) as usual one day, and Mass being now over’.⁴⁷ Both Faricius and William highlight Aldhelm saying holy Mass both whilst in Rome and at the event of the miracle. Faricius speaks of Aldhelm ‘carrying out the sacraments ... The sacraments offered [...] in the Lateran’.⁴⁸ William declares ‘No day passed without Aldhelm chanting Mass’.⁴⁹

Caxton further reiterates that this occurred ‘*at the end of Mass*’ when he had previously stated ‘*and when the Mass was done*’. This reiteration could be for emphasis, or perhaps, more likely, an oversight. The evidence for this apparent slip is revealed in the MS 72

⁴⁵ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 249.

⁴⁶ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 361.

⁴⁷ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 249.

⁴⁸ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 361.

⁴⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p.249.

(1438), the earlier document that Caxton (1483) appears to have copied almost verbatim, which does not include this anomaly.

It is important to note the central tenet of the saying of Mass is the offering to heaven of the bread and wine in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice, both physically and symbolically represented in devotion to the Eucharist. At this juncture it is also most relevant to note that as Aldhelm said Mass at the Church of John Lateran it was in the seventh century, this was prior to the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 which was to determine the sacramental doctrine of transubstantiation.⁵⁰ The bread and wine, rather than being offered during Mass in representational memory of Christ's sacrifice, instead supernaturally manifests, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to become the body and blood of the Saviour himself.⁵¹ Thus, causing those who partake of this sacrifice to be in a state of grace, experiencing the sublime love of the Lord.

Therefore, such a level of holiness attributed to consecration of the holy Eucharist, whilst undoubtedly deeply sacred to all, would have had altered reverential perception from the time of Aldhelm in the seventh century, to Faricius and William's time in the twelfth century, to the time of the Middle English the *Legenda aurea* in the fifteenth century. Ann Astell describes the spiritual sensory perception of the Eucharist in the Middle Ages thus: 'To see the consecrated host for what it was, Christ, was to see it with the eyes of faith; to hear, to smell, to taste, and ultimately to touch Christ and to be touched by him'.⁵² By the fifteenth century, the sacramental ritual of transubstantiation would have been firmly embedded in the Catholic Mass.⁵³ Thus, the inclusion of 'saying the Mass' in the fifteenth-century manuscripts implies that Aldhelm would have been in a state of grace, a state of heightened spiritual

⁵⁰ Chris Schabel, 'Pope, Council, and the *Filioque* in Western Theology, 1274-1439', *Medieval Encounters*, 21 (2015): 190-213.

⁵¹ For the importance of blood and miraculous hosts in the late Middle Ages see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

⁵² Ann W. Astell, *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 3.

⁵³ For specific miracles pertaining to saints and the Eucharist see Joan Carroll Cruz, *Eucharistic Miracles and Eucharistic Phenomena in the lives of the St*, (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 1987). See also, Caroline Walker Bynum, 'The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages', *Church History*, 71.4 (2002): 685-714.

awareness, having just completed the Mass, as the miracle of the chasuble took place, thereby placing the miracle of the chasuble in associated reverential sanctity.⁵⁴

Area of Focus 3: Where the Event Took Place

Each manuscript clearly states that the miracle took place at the Church of Saint John Lateran in Rome. The Abbotsford MS states ‘*at St John Lateran in Rome*’, MS 72: ‘*in the church of St John Lateran*, Caxton: ‘*in the church of St John Lateran*’. Here the location of the miracle is undeniable, with the MS 72 and Caxton using identical phrases. The Abbotsford MS, however, adds a further insistence that the church is in Rome, perhaps to reiterate for readers who may not have had knowledge of the church nor the significance of its location. This inclusion seems unnecessary as the earlier part of the text, before the announcement of the miracles, clearly emphasises Aldhelm’s calling to Rome, which the MS 72 and Caxton echo. It can, therefore, be surmised that the MS 72 and Caxton felt it unwarranted to further include the name of the location of the church as it had already been established.

Originally founded in the fourth century, the Church of John Lateran is established as the Papal Archbasilica and continues to have sacred precedence today. The site is also considered sacred, as inside the nearby Lateran Palace is housed the Scala Sancta, Holy Stairs, claimed to be the twenty-eight stairs that Christ climbed when he was brought to Pilate. The relic is said to have been brought to the Lateran Palace in the fourth century from Jerusalem by Saint Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine. Pilgrims kneel and pray on each step making their way to the top of the sacred stairs, thus qualifying for papal indulgences. In essence the act is a penance and carries with it forgiveness for sins. Saint Helena is most renowned for her quest to Jerusalem in search of wood from the true cross of Christ, on finding such a most sacred relic she brought back to Rome, establishing the feast day of Sancta Crux. However, Jan Willem Drijvers cautions that as the tale of Helena and the wood from the true cross emerged fifty years after her death, it should be considered as legend.⁵⁵

Yet, despite Drijvers’ declaration, the sacred status of the Lateran Palace, at the time of Saint Aldhelm in the seventh-century, would have been remarkable. In his account of the

⁵⁴ For Eucharistic miracles specific to bishops see Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2013), p. 301.

⁵⁵ Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding of the True Cross*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), p. 1.

chasuble miracle, William describes the Lateran Palace thus: ‘There is at Rome an assembly building called the Lateran. The Emperor Constantine had made a palace for the papal pontiffs there out of his own palace, Aldhelm stayed there with the Pope and had many friendly talks with him’.⁵⁶

In researching the sources for the *Vita S. Helenae*, mother of Constantine, composed by Jocelin of Furness (1175–1214), Helen Birkett points out that by the twelfth-century both Constantine and Helena were commonly believed to have roots in British nobility, a notion which had been established during the Anglo-Saxon period, most notably by Bede.⁵⁷ ‘Constantine, proclaimed Emperor in Britain, succeeded to his father’s domains’.⁵⁸ Birkett identifies William of Malmesbury’s (1095–1143) *De Gesta Regum Anglorum* as one of the later sources for Jocelin’s *Vita S. Helenae*. Further stating that William’s own source was Aldhelm’s (639–709) treatise *De virginitate*. Aldhelm’s treatise also proclaims Constantine to be not only Emperor of Britain but also born there ‘Constantine, the son of Constantius, born in Britain of the concubine Helena, controlled the sceptre of government’.⁵⁹

The correlation between Aldhelm and his connection to the Lateran is further given weight regarding Saint Helena in *De virginitate*. Note that Helena is referred to by Aldhelm as ‘the concubine’, Bede also refers to her thus. Aldhelm’s *De virginitate* was written for the nuns at a monastery in Barking most of whom had previously been married but had subsequently turned to Christ.⁶⁰ Therefore, the nuns could not be considered to be in a pure state of virginity, but instead are in a state of chastity, which can be seen as spiritually aspirational towards virginity, hence the name of the treatise *De virginitate*. Such a state can be equated to Saint Helena in that she had been a concubine, it can be assumed, therefore, not a virgin, yet turned to Christ in a state of chastity in the sacred cause of spiritual fulfilment.

⁵⁶ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 249.

⁵⁷ Helen Birkett, *The Saint’s Lives of Jocelin of Furness: Hagiography, Patronage, and Ecclesiastical Politics*, (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), p. 74.

⁵⁸ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 55.

⁵⁹ Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, trans., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), p. 115.

⁶⁰ Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, trans., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), p. 51.

Area of Focus 4: Object of the Miracle

The Abbotsford MS states: ‘and left off his chasuble it happened by the providence of god that no one of his men was ready to take it off his hand’, The MS 72: ‘there would no man take his vestment from him’, Caxton ‘there was no man that would take his chasuble from him at the end of the Mass’.

The object of the miracle is Aldhelm’s priestly vestment. The earlier the MS 72 offers the generic term ‘vestment’, yet it is only later in the account that it refers specifically to the vestment as Aldhelm’s ‘chasuble’. Whereas, the Abbotsford MS and Caxton describe the garment at the outset as his ‘chasuble’, the celebrant’s ornate outer garment or cape worn explicitly when celebrating the Eucharist. The specific naming of the vestment as a chasuble is reverential to the elevated status of the supernatural happening at the end of Mass.

As the object of the miracle is revealed in each text there is a noticeable contrast of style and content. The MS 72 and Caxton apply a direct and matter of fact approach: The MS 72: ‘there would no man take his vestment from him’. Caxton, echoes the MS 72: ‘there was no man that would take his chasuble from him’. Whereas, the Abbotsford MS adds an element of the nature of holiness pertaining to Aldhelm as it declares: ‘it happened by the providence of god that no one of his men was ready to take it off his hand’. The inclusion of ‘it happened by the providence of god’ is a direct reference to the intervention of the Divine to create the circumstances in which the miracle would occur in Aldhelm’s hand.

Faricius refers to the object as a ‘holy vestment’, whereas William specifies ‘chasuble’. Whilst Faricius does not specify the manner in which the chasuble arrives on the sunbeam, William, on the other hand, dramatically has Aldhelm cast away his garment: ‘[...] he threw his vestment, which they call a chasuble, over his shoulder. He wrongly supposed that someone was standing there to catch it, his thoughts no doubt being directed elsewhere and his mind still full of the divine ecstasy. The attendant had quite failed to foresee this and was examining something or other at another part of the altar’.⁶¹ The Abbotsford MS is more akin to William as it states: ‘and when he let it go out of his hand believing that some man had taken it from him’, suggesting that Aldhelm was not paying attention to who would take his chasuble. Whereas the MS 72 and Caxton has Aldhelm’s action as with forethought. In the

⁶¹ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 249.

description of the miracle itself, again there is contrast between the content and style of the Abbotsford MS and the MS 72 and Caxton:

The Miracle

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

and wh^{er} a

he lete it goon oute of his hande bilevyng that so^{me} man
had taken it of hym sodernly a beem of the suⁿ ne (line 40)
came in at an hole of a glasse wyndowe helde up the
chaucible a gode while til suⁿ me man come and toke
it

*and when he let it go out of his hand believing that some
man had taken it from him, suddenly a beam of the sun
came in at a hole of a glass window held up the
chasuble a good while till some man came an took it*

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

_& than he so the sunne beme shyne

in at an hole in the glas wyndowe
and he hynge his chesible there on (line 35)
thatal men might se thye greet
miracle

*and then he saw the sun beam shine
in at a hole in the glass window
and he hung his chasuble thereon*

that all men might see the great miracle

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

And thenne he saw the sonne beme
shyne through the glasse window / & hen (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word) (line 30)
ge hys chesyble theron wherof alle the pe //
ple merveyllled gretely of that miracle
and then he saw the sun beam
shine through the glass window and hu –
ng his chasuble thereon whereof all the pe –
ople marvelled greatly of that miracle

There are distinct differences in the accounts of the performance of the miracle. The first is the Abbotsford MS: ‘and when he let it go out of his hand believing that some man had taken it from him’. The text states that Aldhelm released the garment from his hand in an expectant state of mind, rather than involving any supernatural influence, an almost absent-minded act believing that a man would be there to take the chasuble from him. The action could well have been so commonplace and regular for Aldhelm, as part of the ritual at the end of the Mass, that he may have carried out the action without thinking. This information does not feature in either the MS 72 or Caxton who begin their accounts immediately with the sun beam.

All three accounts coincide in affirming that a beam of sunlight came in through a glass window. The chasuble miracle is akin to that of Saint Ildephonse (607–667) of Toledo, Spain.⁶² He was devoted to the Virgin Mary, and as such one day during a service of fervent Marian hymns, the church where he and his congregation were praying became flooded with

⁶² Ryan D. Giles, ‘Sewn Without a Needle: The Chasuble of Saint Ildaphonsus in the *Milagros de nuestra señora*’, *La corónica*, 42. 1 (2013): 281–97.

a powerful light. The intense luminosity heralded the appearance of the Virgin Mary who descended and presented Ildephonse with an exquisite chasuble, so exquisite the threads cannot be seen, in recognition of his devotion. The chasuble was retained as a sacred relic, and the narrative remained preserved even in the sixteenth century. This miracle, as with the Aldhelm chasuble miracle can be seen as a dramatic link between heaven and earth.

In medieval thought, light streaming in through a glass window without damaging it was seen as a metaphor for the pure virginity of Mary. She is seen as the perfection of the intact glass, representing her pure virginity, as the intense spiritual light of the sun, Christ, enters her womb.⁶³ Christ declares himself to be ‘the light’ as John’s Gospel records on the sermon on the mount:

‘Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world:

He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’.⁶⁴

John 8:12

Lesley K. Twomey highlights medieval literature that refers to the image of a heavenly ray of sun passing through glass and causing no damage as equating to Mary’s virginity despite having conceived. Twomey adds that Gonzalo de Berceo sees the glass as being impervious to heat and cold as a metaphor for the unblemished and unbroken hymen of Mary.⁶⁵ He pays particular attention to understanding the scientific detail embodied in the glass that light can pass through and not break. Alfons Puigarnau refers to the sun as a representation of the Divine in creation, the creation of the sun equating to the creation of man in Genesis 1:3 ‘Fiat Lux’, ‘let there be light’.⁶⁶ Puigarnau cites Luke 21: 25–32 with portent reference to the second coming of Christ ‘and there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the

⁶³ Andrew Charles, Breeze, ‘The Blessed Virgin and the Sunbeam through Glass’, *BELLS*, 2 (1989): 53–64.

⁶⁴ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p. 621.

⁶⁵ Lesley K. Twomey, *The Sacred Space of the Virgin Mary in Medieval Hispanic Literature: From Gonzalo de Berceo to Ambrosio Montesino*, (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2019), p. 200. See also, Yrjo Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine: A Study of the Poetry and Art of the Catholic Church*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1912), pp. v–xii. See also, Cynthia Hahn, ‘*Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400–Circa 1204*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), p. 200.

⁶⁶ Alfons Puigarnau, *Imago dei y lux mundi en el siglo XII. La recepción de la teología de la Luz en la iconografía del pantocrátor en Catalunya*, (unpublished PhD dissertation, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 1990), pp. 64–111. See also, *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p. 1.

stars' identifying Christ as the sun of justice, and the eternity of sun-rays cannot be extinguished.⁶⁷ Puigarnau further notes the significance of the sun in scientific observation of the sun in Carolingian times and middle ages, which built a theology of light, also how in later Romanesque art the sun, and moon, represent the passage of time.⁶⁸ Puigarnau sees a parallel between the sun, the origin of creation, and Christ the origin of life in the Church, he sees sunlight enter as though Christ enters 'la luz del sol que entra como si fuse cristo el que llega'.⁶⁹

Moreover, Christ is viewed as replacing the ancient cult of the sun as he is bathed in light during his transfiguration.⁷⁰ Whilst Christ's transfiguration is mentioned in Matthew 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, and Luke 9:28–36 with reference to Christ's raiment shining, it is only Matthew which equates Christ's face to the brilliance of the sun [...] and his face did shine as the sun [...].⁷¹

In describing how the sunbeam enters the church the Abbotsford MS and the MS 72 in agreement, whereas Caxton differs. The Abbotsford MS: 'came in at a hole of a glass window', the MS 72: 'shine in at a hole in the glass window', Caxton: 'shine through the glass window. The distinction is the 'hole' in the window implying that the window had an imperfection either broken or incomplete, Caxton does not include this information instead continuing with his direct matter-of-fact style.

As with the Abbotsford MS's 'suddenly', Faricius announces the miracle with typical flourish: 'Undoubtably by president of the power of the divine majesty...', thereby, pre-empting the announcement of the miraculous to occur.⁷² William also declares divine intervention as he claims: '...and he showed his greatness when human activity failed'.⁷³ Then lends itself to the Abbotsford MS by declaring 'For at once...'⁷⁴. Regarding the description of the sunbeam entering the church, Faricius does not mention the manner in which the sunbeam enters

⁶⁷ Alfons Puigarnau, *Imago dei y Lux mundi en el siglo XII. La recepción de la teología de la luz en la iconografía del pantocrátor en Catalunya*, (unpublished PhD dissertation, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 1990), pp. 113–179. See also, *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p. 1042.

⁶⁸ Alfons Puigarnau, *Imago dei y lux mundi*, pp. 169–179.

⁶⁹ Alfons Puigarnau, *Imago dei y lux mundi*, pp. 228–264.

⁷⁰ Alfons Puigarnau, *Imago dei y lux mundi*, p. 191.

⁷¹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p. 966.

⁷² Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 361.

⁷³ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 249.

⁷⁴ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 249.

the church, just that it appears. William describes it thus: ‘a sunbeam gleamed brightly through the clear glass of the window’. Therefore, neither texts include the sunbeam coming in through a hole in the window. It is curious that both the Abbotsford MS and the MS 72, which generally are not in agreement, whereas the MS 72 and Caxton in general are, both include that the sunbeam came in through a hole in the window. Clearly, the ‘hole’ is not from the original sources of Faricius and William. Could this be a coincidence, or perhaps the author of the Abbotsford MS (1443–1449) had access to the MS 72 (1438)? It appears highly unlikely, as both manuscripts are dissimilar in other content.

The recount of the precise moment of the miracle itself has the Abbotsford MS continuing to be distinctly different as it declares the sunbeam ‘held up the chasuble’. As mentioned earlier, the text claims that Aldhelm was unaware of the sunbeam. The account continues in this vein by asserting that the sunbeam itself was the agent of the miracle, as without Aldhelm having seen it, and his eye not on his chasuble, the sunbeam, as it were, ‘saved’ the vestment from falling by catching it and holding it. Thus, God operated through the sunbeam as divine light to perform the miracle, rather than Aldhelm being the sole performer of the miraculous event. Here Augustine’s delineation of creation in nature, the sunbeam in its natural form as a level of wonder, is possessed of a supernatural force which causes it to act beyond the confines of nature to his third level of wonder.⁷⁵

Both the MS 72 and Caxton clearly depict Aldhelm as the singular agent and performer of the miracle, as he carries out the deliberate act of hanging the chasuble on the sunbeam, described identically. The MS 72: ‘and he hung his chasuble thereon’, Caxton: ‘and hung his chasuble thereon’. This approach clearly has Aldhelm not only aware of the sunbeam, but also having the ability to command its supernatural nature to hold his garment, which a sunbeam in its natural state could plainly not physically attain.

The MS 72 and Caxton: agree that audience witnesses, ‘men’, ‘all the people’ were key to the event. The Abbotsford MS does not state this. Instead it has ‘held up the chasuble a good while’ which merely tentatively implies there was an audience to see such a marvel take place. However, it is more likely than not that there was an audience present, even if not specifically mentioned. Mass is a public event usually attended by the laity, unless it was a private Mass for clergy only, in either case there would have been an audience. There is also the

⁷⁵ William Babcock, trans., *The Works of Saint Augustine a Translation for the 21st Century: The City of God (De Civitate Dei) XI–XXII*, (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013), 63–66.

possibility that Aldhelm was saying a private Mass just himself, as a priest often does, but even then it would have been more than likely, particularly in such a prestigious setting, that he would have been attended by altar servers, yet another possible audience.

The Abbotsford MS: ‘suddenly a beam of the sun came in at a hole of a glass window held up the chasuble a good while till some man came and took it’.

The MS 72 ‘and he hung his chasuble thereon that all men might see the great miracle’.

Caxton: ‘and hung his chasuble thereon whereof all the people marvelled greatly of that miracle’.

Moreover, the audience were not merely afforded a fleeting glimpse but were shown a deliberately effective performance that held their attention. The Abbotsford MS claims that the sun beam held the chasuble ‘a good while till some man came and took it’, the MS 72 ‘that all men might see’, Caxton: ‘all the people marvelled greatly’. Thus, the performance is confirmed by all three documents as having witness validation. It is at this point that the first mention of the word ‘miracle’ appears in both the MS 72 and Caxton, which further establishes validation of the event. Abbotsford, in typical fashion, withholds this dramatic claim until the final word in the account.

Faricius has the chasuble ‘held firmly and constantly’ by the sunbeam.⁷⁶ William offers further details about the scientific mechanics of how the chasuble was supported in time and space, declaring that the sunbeam: ‘...inserted itself under the chasuble and carried it, held somewhat above the ground, across the empty space’.⁷⁷ William’s more detailed account lends itself to the Abbotsford MS, as the text claims the sunbeam ‘held up the chasuble’, rather than the vestment being deliberately hung on the sunbeam as with the MS 72 and Caxton.

Faricius’s brief description employs the word ‘constantly’, indicating that the garment hung on the sunbeam for quite some time, implying that the congregation and ministers would have witnessed the miracle. William gives a rapturous account of the audience’s reaction: ‘I can hardly describe the excited buzz of chatter there among the people when they saw

⁷⁶ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 361.

⁷⁷ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 249.

nature serving the servant of Christ contrary to nature'.⁷⁸ All three codices echo William's claim that the miracle was witnessed by an audience. Yet, only Abbotsford MS adds 'till some man came and took it'. Again, this appears to be an embellishment, as neither Faricius nor William mention this in their twelfth-century accounts. Perhaps the author felt a conclusion was necessary to the miracle, otherwise the reader could infer that the vestment hangs on the sunbeam yet.

The Denouement of the Miracle

The denouement of the miracle sees the chasuble brought to Malmesbury, Aldhelm's monastery, and all three documents end with this triumphal statement. With the chasuble firmly announced by all three manuscripts to be then housed at Malmesbury, Aldhelm's spiritual home and site of the monastery and Abbey which he founded, this not only set the seal of the event as a *bona fide* miracle with the physical evidence as proof but also heralded Malmesbury as a place of pilgrimage where the faithful could flock to witness the actual chasuble that had been imbued and blessed with miraculous essence. which the Abbotsford MS, its tone more focused on the sacred, declares it as 'kept precious as for a relic [...] in remembrance of the said miracle'.

The original sources also declare that the chasuble was taken to Malmesbury. Faricius has the garment housed at the abbey with 'holiness and great reverence', clearly indicating that the vestment was considered a miraculous relic.⁷⁹ William states: 'It is preserved at Malmesbury to this day, and very great care is taken of a garment which knew such goodness. The sacristans do all in their power to enable future generations to enjoy the sight of it unblemished'.⁸⁰ Aldhelm, as mentioned earlier, would more than likely have taken his own ecclesiastical accoutrements with him from England, which would have most probably included his own chasuble, as the journey from Malmesbury to Rome, approximately 2000km, would have taken many months to accomplish. Inevitably this journey would have entailed following the pilgrimage route of the Via Francigena. Whilst on the journey Aldhelm would have stopped for rest, refreshment, to pray and celebrate Mass at the various pilgrimage sites en route.

⁷⁸ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 249.

⁷⁹ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 361.

⁸⁰ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 250.

The route begins at Canterbury, across the sea to Calais, down through what is now northern France, pausing at such pilgrimage sites as Reims. On through what is now Switzerland, calling at Lausanne and on to the treacherous Saint Bernard Pass, no doubt thankful of the monastery there, arriving at what is now Italy. The final leg of the journey would have taken Aldhelm down through the peninsula, pausing at further pilgrimage sites such as Pavia, Sienna, and Viterbo, until ultimately arriving in Rome. Thus, the Abbot Aldhelm would have had much need of his vestments and other necessary ecclesiastical items, such as a chalice and paten, to facilitate his sacred duty of saying holy Mass whilst on his sacred pilgrimage. The Abbotsford MS, the only manuscript of the three to mention what Aldhelm carried with him to Rome, supports this hypothesis. As stated earlier, the Abbotsford MS emphasises:

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

‘... the use and (line 32)
 custome of this hooly abbot was that whider so evir
 he went on pilgrimage he had alwey caryed with hym
 Al the ornamentus the which longen to a preste to seyn
 with a messe and oo tyme whan he had seid messe at
 seynt Johⁿ Lateranence in Rome...’

*‘... the use and custom of this holy abbot was that wither so ever
 He went on pilgrimage he had always carried with him
 All the ornaments the which belonged to a priest to say
 With a Mass and one time when he had said Mass at
 Saint John Lateran in Rome...’*

Here it is notable that the Abbotsford MS strongly implies that Aldhelm used his own ‘ornaments’, inevitably including his chasuble, when saying Mass at the Church of John Lateran: ‘[...] always carried with him All the ornaments the which belonged to a priest to say With a Mass and one time when he had said Mass at the church of John Lateran in Rome’.

The two statements appear to be linked, Aldhelm having his own ecclesiastical accoutrements, followed by immediately him saying Mass at said church.

The nature of a relic, such as the chasuble, is at once the awe it creates in its supernatural mystery, or its involvement in a miraculous event pertaining to a saint, in this case Aldhelm. Thus, the chasuble relic can be seen as possessing two-fold miraculous qualities. At once, it carries the level of wonder that is beyond nature, as described by Augustine, in its relationship with the saint and the miraculous act as indirect or bestowed power. Yet, also its miraculous association, as described by Anselm, with the direct presence of the Divine in the form of the sacred consecration of the Eucharist, whilst the vestment was worn by Aldhelm, and the Divine present in the heavenly light that held the chasuble. As an ecclesiastical vestment, reverence for such a garment is already a given. The power such a relic possesses can also radiate its spiritual quality in its housed location, creating a reverent environment. Thus, Malmesbury, as is stated, is the relic's resting place creating a site of pilgrimage for pilgrims to witness the relic, and no doubt take with them holy mementoes, sold by entrepreneurial merchants, to continue their sensory perception of the miraculous on their travels and at home.⁸¹

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

it thereof the which chaucible was afterward kept
preciously as for a relike in monastio meduliensi (last two words underlined in red)
in remembrance of the seid miracle

*it thereof the which chasuble was afterward kept
preciously as for a relic in the monastery at Malmesbury
in remembrance of the said miracle*

⁸¹ Regarding the nature of relics see Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart*, pp. 1–11. For visual sensory perception of relics see Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saint in Christian Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

The MS72 fols 244^v – 245^r

and the same chesyple
ys yet at Malmesbury the colour
there of is pirpil *

and the same chasuble

*is yet at Malmesbury the colour
there of is purple*

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

& the same chesyble is yet at Malmesbury /
the colour therof is purple:

and the same chasuble

*is yet at Malmesbury the colour
thereof is purple*

The Abbotsford MS does not include the colour of the vestment, nevertheless, the MS 72 and Caxton identically describe the chasuble ‘the colour thereof is purple’. This colour suggests that the Mass was carried out during Lent, perhaps indicating that Aldhelm was a penitent, therefore the garment would have been linked to Christ’s Passion. However, whilst Faricius’s account is devoid of description of the chasuble, William applies detail: ‘It is made of very fine thread, dyed a full, deep scarlet colour from the juices of shellfish. It has black roundels with pictures of peacocks worked inside’.⁸²

In *The Alchemy of Paint*, Spike Bucklow informs that the colour Tyranian purple, used to dye fabric, was obtained from a mollusc named the murex snail.⁸³ This appears to combine both the manuscript’s description of the garment as purple, and William’s inclusion of the colour from shellfish. However, William’s description as the vestment being ‘deep

⁸² Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 250.

⁸³ Spike Bucklow, *The Alchemy of Paint: Art, Science and Secrets from the Middle Ages*, (London: Marion Boyars, 2009), pp. 24–32.

scarlet' could indicate Aldhelm's royal connections, or the office in which he was held in Rome as of high ecclesiastical rank. Though, there must be caution with this regard as Aldhelm does not become bishop until his return from Rome. Bucklow acknowledges that the colour scarlet was indeed used for clerical vestments of high office, yet adds that the word 'scarlet', as opposed to 'red' was originally used in the medieval period to describe a type of cloth rather than a specific colour. Moreover, C. P. Bingham points out that in the medieval period the word 'red' was often used to refer to various hues including purple.⁸⁴

The Baby Miracle

The baby miracle is set within a background common to all three documents, which state that Saint Aldhelm spent time in Rome with Pope Sergius I. However, only the Abbotsford MS contains an account of the baby miracle. This occurrence immediately follows the chasuble miracle in the text, stating that both events occurred in proximity in time to one another. As mentioned previously, Bede did not include any miracles in his account of Aldhelm, indicating, therefore, that the Abbotsford MS uses Faricius or William, or both, as a source for the baby miracle as they both give vivid accounts.

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

It happnd also (line 45)

aboute the same tyme the popis fame to ben hurt in Rome
by the birthe of a childe whos modir was nat cured by
an husbonde and was familiar in the popis court thus

hevyng blissid Aldelme asked the childe but nyne day //

es of age that he should tellen who bigat hym and anoon (line 50)

the childe comfid the Pope seid that he was nat hys
fadir wherthough anoon the infante cesfid

⁸⁴ C. P. Bingham, 'Colour', in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes, and Donald Scragg, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 118.

*It happened also
 about the same time the Pope's fame to be hurt in Rome
 by the birth of a child whose mother was not in the care of
 a husband and was familiar in the Pope's court thus
 having blessed Aldhelm asked the child but nine day –
 s of age that he should tell who begat him and anon
 the child comforted the Pope said that he was not his
 father wherethrough the infant ceased*

The above quote from the text begins with 'It happnd also aboute the same tyme'. 'It happened also about the same time'. This phrase immediately follows an account of the chasuble miracle, to follow, which also occurred in Rome, yet that miracle does not include the presence of the Pope. The chasuble miracle is a preamble to the more dramatic and potent baby miracle, as Aldhelm, by his supernatural intervention, saved the Pope from potential disgrace. The following phrase clearly indicates the Pope's trepidation: 'the popis fame to ben hurt in Rome' 'the Pope's fame to be hurt in Rome'. The reputation of the Pope is under threat.

The following phrases gives three reasons for the Pope's jeopardy, in increasing degrees of potent urgency:

- a) 'by the birthe of a childe' 'by the birth of a child'
- b) 'whos modir was nat cured by an husbonde' 'whose mother was not in the care of a husband'
- c) 'and was familiar in the popis court' 'and was familiar in the Pope's court'

The initial phrase announces the birth of a child. Here there is the first dramatic cause for concern, remembering that the precursor to this phrase warns of the Pope's perilous circumstance. The initial danger is the birth of a child, which in itself is generally innocuous. Yet, the following phrase introduces controversy in that the mother is unmarried. This scandalous announcement introduces an air of mystery and intrigue, as there is no mention of the father. The final phrase in this trio increases the scandalous tension by stating that the mother was acquainted in the Pope's court. The word 'familiar' seems to have had different connotations in the fifteenth-century than mere acquaintance, possibly of a more intimate nature.

However, its technical use in Middle English is referred to as ‘to be a member of a household or servant’.⁸⁵ Curiously, the text does not then elaborate by describing the reaction of the court to this news. Instead, the Abbotsford MS account immediately pours oil on troubled waters in the form of Aldhelm’s calming, almost matter of fact, miraculous intervention.

The part of Aldhelm’s intervention begins by categorically stating that the child was nine days old: ‘Thus hevyng blissid Aldelme asked the childe but nyne day //es of age’ ‘thus having blessed Aldhelm admired the child but nine days of age’. This declaration appears to be superfluous to the content of the text. Yet, both Faricius and William also highlight the child’s same age. The necessary inclusion of the child’s age is a precursor to the miracle itself. If the age of the child had not been mentioned his being able to utter words would not have been miraculous.

The miracle itself involves a verbal interaction between Aldhelm and the nine-day old child, albeit an indirect account; the actual words spoken are not present. The Abbotsford MS notes: ‘that he should tellen who bigat hym and anon the childe comfid the Pope seid that he was nat hys fadir whereupon anon the infante cesfid’ ‘that he should tell who begat him and anon the child comforted the Pope said that he was not his father whereupon the infant ceased’. Thus the account of this miracle ends, and no information is given regarding the outcome of the miraculous announcement. Perhaps the author found it unnecessary.

Faricius gives a brief account of the miracle, most notably using the term ‘contra naturam’ with reference to the nine-day old baby speaking.⁸⁶ Thereby, proclaiming that the child thus responding to Aldhelm in an intelligible way was a truly supernatural event, hence a miracle. A possible exegetic antecedent, though unusually not employed in this instance by Faricius, could be from Luke’s Gospel:

‘And it came to pass, that, when

Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leapt in her womb;

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:’.⁸⁷

Luke 1:41

⁸⁵ Middle English Dictionary, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary> [consulted: 5th August 2020].

⁸⁶ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 360.

⁸⁷ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p.1009.

Thus, the direct effect of an utterance of an adult, a holy, blessed adult, in the form of Mary, provoked a profound response from Elizabeth's baby, as the baby was to become John the Baptist. The fundamental catalyst for such a reaction from the baby is the solemn identity of the father, the Divine, directly present in Mary's womb. Therefore, a possible premise for the baby miracle and the miraculous interjection between Aldhelm and the baby could be the holiness personified in Divine revelation, the hidden nature revealing itself as the unfathomable supernatural, the ultimate sign of holiness as identified by Augustine, and then Anselm.

William dedicates chapter 219, albeit fewer than two pages, to the baby miracle entitled 'Aldhelm Defends Pope Sergius'.⁸⁸ William declares it to be Aldhelm's 'second miracle', after the miracle of the chasuble. Considerable detail is included, for example William describes the baby as a 'boy'.

Regarding the mother, William states that 'the woman had taken the profession of a nun [...] and there was no sign of a father. Soon, not just in unsure suspicion but amid a public outcry the Pope was being signalled as the guilty person. The woman, it was said, had been accustomed to visit him for rather private conversations.'⁸⁹ This is further evidence the term 'familiar' refers to intimate tendencies, thus validating the Abbotsford MS use of 'and was familiar in the Pope's court'.

Nonetheless, William continues most of the rest of his account in firm defence of the Pope's innocence, citing evidence of the holy and fastidious work carried out by the Pontiff, referring those who doubt him to consult his letters. He claims the 'people', later referred to as the 'crowd', who accused him then added non-specified guilt upon guilt on the Pontiff to the point where they were calling for him to suffer crucifixion. Next, he was said to be guilty of all crimes, then that he merited a crucifixion as bad as could be imagined'.⁹⁰ Undoubtedly, William is using Christ's crucifixion as an analogy for the Pope's perilous position, underlining he is Christ's representative on earth. Perhaps this is for dramatic effect, as it does not appear in Faricius, nor the Abbotsford MS. Nevertheless, the reference does provoke powerful connotations as both Mark 15:13, and Luke 23:21 attest:

⁸⁸ Preest, trans., *Gesta* pp. 250 – 251.

⁸⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 250.

⁹⁰ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 250.

‘But they cried saying crucify him, crucify him’.⁹¹

Luke 23:21

It is at this point that Aldhelm ‘having knowledge of the Pope’s purity’ speaks directly saying ‘Bring the child here, so that he may disprove with his own lips the charge against the Pope’.⁹² It is notable that this is the only time Aldhelm speaks directly spoken. When it comes to his actual verbal interaction with the baby, which would indeed have been of notable record, we return to conjecture. William tells us that Aldhelm first baptises the child then ‘... asked him publicly whether the people’s opinion about his father was true ... the little lad, making an effort, undid the knot of doubt and in the clearest voice declared that Sergius was pure and innocent and had never had any dealings with the woman’.⁹³ At this point the tables turned for the Pontiff as ‘the crowd cheered the miracle’.

Thus, the Pope was exonerated and Aldhelm was again hailed as a miracle worker. Intriguingly, William adds, as a tantalising footnote, that when Aldhelm was asked to reveal who the actual father of the baby was he declined to answer, claiming that rather it was his job to protect the innocent not condemn the guilty. This suggests that either Aldhelm’s conversation with the baby extended beyond more than a few words, perhaps in private, or more likely, he had insider, divine, knowledge that others were not privy to.

Miracles involving babies or children in hagiography are predominantly of a healing or restorative life nature.⁹⁴ For example, Laura Hollister cites a Spanish account by Pedro Serra y Postius of pilgrims who witness a three month old child act as a vessel through which God speaks forgiveness to a repentant man, the child itself does not form words, as in the case of Aldhelm’s baby miracle, but speaks with the voice of the Divine.⁹⁵ Marian intervention leads to the barren woman’s son being restored to life, and the stillborn child who was revived at

⁹¹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p. 1045.

⁹² Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 250.

⁹³ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 250.

⁹⁴ For ritual and intercession in the healing of children see Ronald C. Finucane, *The Rescue of the Innocents: Endangered Children in Medieval Miracles* (New York, NY: St Martin’s Press, 1997).

⁹⁵ Serra y Postius, Pedro, *Epitome Historico del Portentoso Santuario, y real Monasterio de Nuestra Senora de Montserrat, ilustrado con los sucesos historicos mas memorables de los principes sus devotos y bienhechores* (Barcelona: Pablo Campino, 1747) cited in Laura Nichole Hollister, *A Creation of Personal Piety: The Performance Art of Medieval Pilgrimage at Montserrat* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Durham: 2019), p. 70.

Salas.⁹⁶ However, others may have a possible antecedent reference to exegesis in the form of 1 Kings 3:16-28, in which two 'harlots' address Solomon with a babe each one claiming it to be hers. To solve the issue Solomon call for a sword to cut the child in half and give each to the women. At such a drastic resolution the true mother was revealed by her plaintive response, thus the child is restored to her.⁹⁷

In a similar vein Laura Ackerman Smoller, in exploring the cult of Vincent Ferrer (1350–1419), considers the case of the 'chopped up baby' as she refers to it.⁹⁸ The miracle is of a mother, clearly demented, who chops up her baby and then cooks it. Saint Vincent miraculously intercedes and restores the baby to full health. There are comparisons to be made here with the narrative of the Solomon and Saint Vincent miracles, and Saint Aldhelm's baby miracle. Each miracle involves a baby rather than a non-specifically aged child. Each are restorative, or more so resurrection miracles, a miracle reflecting that of the risen Christ. This category of miracle is seen also in Aldhelm's performance, the restoration is in Aldhelm causing the babe to verbally acquit Pope Sergius from the life-threatening claim that he was the infant's father. The resurrection is restoring the Pope's credibility as Father of the Church, as well as Christ's representative on Earth.

The Tempest Miracle

The tempest miracle appears to be Aldhelm's first miracle on English soil. Indeed, there are no accounts of any miracle performed by Aldhelm previous to his pilgrimage to Rome. Prior to Aldhelm's supernatural acts, the nature of his holiness had been revealed in his exceptional personality traits. Therefore, Rome appears to have been a catalyst for Aldhelm's miracles. Thus, the nature of Aldhelm's holiness shifts from a man of holy disposition to one who possesses the sacred gift of the supernatural.

The tempest miracle is recorded in the MS 72 and Caxton but does not warrant attention in the Abbotsford MS. This omission further lends weight to the Abbotsford MS being

⁹⁶ The Oxford Cantigas de Santa Maria Database:
http://csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.php?p=poem_list&keyword=95 [consulted 4th August 2020].

⁹⁷ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p. 374.

⁹⁸ Laura Ackerman Smoller, *The Saint and the Chopped-Up Baby: The Cult of Vincent Ferrer in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

written for a female, or perhaps mixed, audience who would respond to elements of nature traits rather than that of dramatic action whose target audience would have been primarily male. Perhaps the event was not present in the source of the Abbotsford MS, yet this is doubtful as it is in Faricius's, and William's versions.

The Abbotsford MS does include the initial part of a miracle performed by Aldhelm in England. The complete account is missing in the folio as a 7cm section across the foot of column A, on which it was written, has been cut out. The text at the top of column B does not offer any further account of the miracle, instead it devotes this section to Aldhelm's holy qualities. The miracle, which is present in Faricius and William, involves Aldhelm building a church only to find that one of the wooden beams was too short. Aldhelm prayed over it and miraculously it became the correct length.⁹⁹ The Abbotsford MS has the interrupted account thus, located in the text immediately after the baby miracle in Rome. This new miracle continues Aldhelm's supernatural gift from the holy city directly to England:

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

this man = (line 54)

nys holynesse was so grete and so axceptable in the syght
of god that oo tyme a beem which was ordeyned to
ben in the churche of his monasterie and was to shorte

*'This man's holiness was so great and so acceptable in the sight
Of god that one time a beam which was ordained to
Be in the church of his monastery and was too short'*

This miracle is present in neither the MS 72 nor Caxton. A possible explanation could be that this supernatural act has seemingly gentle content with no dramatic element, which is akin to the Abbotsford MS's calm tone; the tempest miracle, on the other hand, which is ab-

⁹⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 247–248. Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 365.

sent from the Abbotsford MS, has an altogether different tone and is well suited to the dramatic timbre of the MS 72 and Caxton where it is present. Before beginning the tempest miracle narrative, it is important to set the scene from other sections of the life of Saint Aldhelm regarding the saint's return to England, which is held in the two documents.¹⁰⁰

Return to England

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

and w⁺ (ithi)n

a while aftyr he come in to Ingle⁻ (n) d (line 40)

ayeen and brought with hym ful

greet p^rvilegie undyr the [popes]

seel of leed and when he come to

the kynge Ive and to Athelred þat

confermyd alle that the Pope hadde (line 45)

gran⁻ tyd to his howse of malmysbury

and within a while after he came in to England

again and brought with him ful

greet privileges under the Pope's

seal of lead and when he came to

the king Ine and to Athelred that

confirmed all that the Pope had

granted to his house of Malmesbury

Caxton f.186^v – 187^r

After he came agayn in to England (line 35)

and brought wyth hym many pryuyleges

¹⁰⁰See Chapter Seven Comparative Transcription section 6 'Return to England' and section eight 'Aldhelm becomes counsellor to Brightwolde, Archbishop of Canterbury'.

under the Popes seal: whyche after kyng

Ine confermed alle y^t (that) the Pope hadde gran (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicate broken word)
ted to the hows of malmesburye.

after he came again in to England

and brought with him many privileges

under the Pope’s seal, which after king

Ine confirmed all that the Pope had granted

to the house of Malmesbury

The MS 72 and Caxton accounts of Aldhelm’s return to England from Rome do not consider the journey itself, which is given great attention in Faricius and William. The MS 72 and Caxton do, however, focus on the privileges Aldhelm brought with him as a gift from Pope Sergius. Both texts are again mostly identical as they refer to the destination of the privileges: ‘granted to the house of Malmesbury’, Caxton refers to the house as ‘the’, the MS 72 as ‘his’ yet I consider this difference to be of no particular relevance to content of the text, only the MS 72 using a more personal indicator to signify Malmesbury as Aldhelm’s house.

A further difference in the application of vocabulary is in the phrase offered by the MS 72: ‘and brought with him ful greet privileges’. Caxton, on the other hand replaces the word ‘full’ with ‘many’. The term ‘full’ in Middle English refers to the privileges as being ‘complete’ rather than ‘many’ which is ‘manifold’¹⁰¹ Perhaps Caxton did not feel it necessary to give the privileges such virtuous worth.

¹⁰¹ A.L. Mayhew and Walter W. Skeat *A Concise Dictionary of Middle English from AD 1150 to 1580*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), p. 95.

Aldhelm becomes counsellor to Brightwolde, Archbishop of Canterbury

Following Aldhelm's return to England from Rome he garnered the attention of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Brightwolde.¹⁰² This is reported in the MS 72 and Caxton, but not in the Abbotsford MS. The Abbotsford MS omits any reference to Aldhelm's return to England, privileges from the Pope, becoming counsellor to the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the tempest miracle. Perhaps the author was unaware of these key points in Aldhelm's life due to limited sources, or possibly thought this scene would be of less interest than other stories about Saint Aldhelm to his intended readership, thereby tailoring the text to meet specific audience needs. Yet, this seems doubtful as the events play an intrinsic part in the life of Aldhelm. The Abbotsford MS focuses the rest of the text solely on Aldhelm's holy living, which will be outlined later.

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

And

Brightwolde that was than arche//
Bissho^p of Caⁿturbury herde of
Aldelynes holy levyng & sent for
hym to be hys cou(n)^t feylour and there (line 60)
they levyd to gedyr many a day in
ful holy lyf and ful joyfull were
eyther of other *

and

Brightwolde that was the arch –

bishop of Canterbury heard of

Aldhelm's holy living and sent for

¹⁰² See Chapter Seven Comparative Transcription section 6 'Return to England' section eight 'Aldhelm becomes Counsellor to Brightwolde, Archbishop of Canterbury'.

*him to be his counsellor and there
they lived together many a day in
full holy life and full joyful were
either of other*

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

& bryghtwold y^c (that) was
archebisshop of Canterbury: and he sente
for hym to hys counceyllour: & they lyved (line 50)
to gyder full holyly longe tyme.
*And eche was ful glad and joyefull of
other.

*and Brightwolde that was
archbishop of Canterbury and he sent
for him to his counsellor, and they lived
together full holy long time
and each was full glad and joyful of
other*

Now the text elevates Aldhelm to the position of counsellor to the Archbishop of Canterbury, why? Aldhelm assisted and counselled the Pope and now there is equivalence in being counsellor to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the foremost ecclesiastical figure head in England. The MS 72 gives us a brief yet succinct reason: ‘the archbishop of Canterbury heard of Aldhelm’s holy living’. The nature of holiness in Aldhelm is recognised by no less than the Archbishop of Canterbury as he became aware of Aldhelm’s ‘holy living’, so much so that he calls him to be his counsellor. As to the specificity of Aldhelm’s holy living referred to in the MS 72 as attracting the attention of the Archbishop, it is neither expanded on nor given definition. Perhaps Aldhelm’s time with the Pope in Rome, and his two miracles

there, served to define Aldhelm's holiness in Brightwolde's eyes. Yet, it is more likely that Aldhelm returning with substantial privileges from the Pope would have been a catalyst for such a promotion. The relationship between Aldhelm and the Pope and Aldhelm and the Archbishop of Canterbury, as advisor and confessor, would be seen as parallel making the Pope and the Archbishop of equal ecclesiastical rank, at the summit of their vocation. Such an observation would have been of keen interest in an English context with the Reformation gathering apace. Caxton, on the other hand, fails to include the reason for Aldhelm's ecclesiastical elevation and in typical unembellished reporterly style simply states: 'archbishop of Canterbury and he sent for him to his counsellor'.

The Tempest Miracle

The Beginning of the Account of the Miracle

In contrast to other content in the MS 72 and Caxton life of Aldhelm, a considerable amount of folio space is given over to this particular miracle, twenty-three lines in the case of the MS 72 and fourteenth in Caxton.¹⁰³ Notably, Caxton's account has such abbreviations as 'y^c (that)', 'hȳ (hym)', and 'thê (them)', not applied in the MS 72, which may account for Caxton's text having slightly fewer lines. It is important to recall that the MS 72 is handwritten, whereas Caxton's the *Golden Legende* is the first printed version, therefore Caxton's use of such abbreviations would lend itself to the technical limitations of typescript.¹⁰⁴

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

And in a day as
they were on the see syde by Dover
there seyld a shi^p with marchan^t // (line 65)
dyse not fer fro the londe & than
seynt Aldelyne clepid to theym to
wyte yf they hadde any orname^t t

¹⁰³ See Chapter Seven Comparative Transcription, section nine 'Dover Tempest Miracle'.

¹⁰⁴ For issues regarding setting print from manuscript see A.S.G. Edwards 'Representing the Middle English Manuscript', in Derek Pearsall, ed., *New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies*, (York: York Medieval Studies, 2000), pp. 65-79.

that longid to the holy churche with in
shiþ for to selle

and in a day as

they were on the seaside by Dover

there sailed a ship with merchan –

dise not far from the land and then

Saint Aldhelm called to them to

find out if they had any ornament

that belonged to the holy church within

ship for to sell

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

And on a daye as they stood at the
see syde by dover castell / they sawe a shyp
laden wyth marchaundyse not ferre fro
them. And saynt Aldelme called to them
to wyte yf they had ony ornament lʒogyng
to holy churche within theyr shyp to selle:

(line 55)

and on a day as they stood at the

seaside by Dover castle they saw a ship

laden with merchandise not far from

them. And Saint Aldhelm called to them

find out if they had any ornament belonging

to holy church within their ship to sell

At the beginning of the tempest miracle narrative the location is clearly stated as Dover. As the MS 72 begins with ‘and in a day as they were on the seaside by Dover’. Caxton offers further detail by mentioning a landmark: ‘and on a day as they stood at the seaside by Dover castle’. The ‘*they*’ referred to in both texts are Aldhelm and Brightwolde. Both texts then refer to a merchant ship, located just offshore, that has caught their attention. The MS 72 describes it simply as ‘there sailed a ship with merchandise not far from the land’. Caxton, with an uncharacteristic flourish of dramatic vocabulary adds ‘laden’ to describe the amount of merchandise the ship was carrying ‘they saw a ship laden with merchandise not far from them’. Perhaps the dramatic texture of the content to follow inspired this.

Both Faricius and William attest that the event took place near Dover Castle on the coast.¹⁰⁵ William dedicates chapter 224 to ‘Aldhelm Acquires a Bible at Dover’.¹⁰⁶ Thus, highlighting the significance of the event related to a sacred object, in this case a Bible, as he had done with the chasuble miracle. Faricius and William both indicate Aldhelm visited Dover in order to attend merchant ships that were in the harbour, neither mention the quantity of goods on board. Unlike the MS 72 and Caxton, neither employ the word ‘they’ and no mention is made of Archbishop Brightwolde, indicating that Aldhelm was alone. William states that Dover is twenty miles from Canterbury, therefore in the jurisdiction of the Archbishop.¹⁰⁷

Both the MS 72 and Caxton employ the word ‘any’ suggesting that not all of the goods on board the ship were of ecclesiastical origin. The MS 72: ‘Saint Aldhelm called to them to find out if they had any ornament that belonged to the holy church within ship for to sell’ Caxton replicates ‘And Saint Aldhelm called to them to find out if they had any ornament belonging to holy church within their ship to sell’.

Faricius states the manner of Aldhelm’s question to the merchants regarding any goods relating to the Church is a ‘*modeste interrogavit*’, and has him looking for objects ‘of use for the Church’.¹⁰⁸ William has Aldhelm ‘[...] strolling along the harbour front, and gazing keenly at the merchandise to see if the sailors had happened to bring anything suitable for

¹⁰⁵ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 367.

¹⁰⁶ Preest, trans., *Gesta* pp. 256–257.

¹⁰⁷ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 256.

¹⁰⁸ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 367.

church use'.¹⁰⁹ The description 'for church use' is in contrast to the MS 72 and Caxton use of 'belonging to the holy church'. William mentions that the sailors had brought with them 'a store of books' one of which Aldhelm spies as a Bible.¹¹⁰ Animosity ensues as Aldhelm attempts to lower the price; the merchants are not amused and 'the foreign crew jeered at him', accusing Aldhelm of treachery regarding haggling over goods that were not his to price, and in their anger the merchants 'rudely pushed him off' and sailed from the harbour.¹¹¹ Faricius's account follows William's in the same vein. In the MS 72 and Caxton the merchants express their antagonism with a retort:

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

but the mer// (line 70)
 chandys had scorne of hym & þouȝt
 that he was not of power to bye suche
 thyngis as they hadde & so deptyd
 fro thys holy man

but the mer –
chants regarded him scornfully and thought
that he was not of power to buy such
things as they had and so departed
from this holy man

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

But y^c (that) marchauntes had dysdayne of hȳ (hym)
 & thought he was not of power to bye su // (line 60)

¹⁰⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 256.

¹¹⁰ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 256.

¹¹¹ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 256.

che thynges as they hadde to selle & depar //
ted fro the holy man

but that merchants had disdain of him

and thought he was not of power to buy su –

ch things as they had to sell and depar –

ted from the holy man

The merchant's retort included contempt and accusing Aldhelm of not having the wealth or position to buy treasured ecclesiastical goods from them. The MS 72: 'but the merchants regarded him scornfully and thought that he was not of power to buy such things as they had'. Caxton in almost identical narrative claims: 'but that merchants had disdain of him and thought he was not of power to buy such things as they had to sell'. The use of 'scorn' in the case of the MS 72 and 'disdain' in Caxton have equal meaning and intensity of purpose in Middle English.¹¹² Thus, with such a negative endorsement towards Aldhelm, the ship leaves. The MS72 and Caxton both echo Faricius and William's terms when referring to the merchants' attitude towards Aldhelm as they sailed away. Faricius uses 'rejected' and William 'jeered'. Somewhat touchingly, though, both the MS 72 and Caxton refer to Aldhelm as 'the holy man' as the merchants depart, almost in defence of him: 'and departed from the holy man'. Both Faricius and William have Aldhelm being left in a benign state, his holiness evident.

¹¹² Middle English Dictionary, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary> [consulted: 5th August 2020].

The Miracle

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

but anoon fyl
on them so greet tempest that they (line 75)
were in point to be loste • and than
oone of them seide we suffer this
greet trouble fore we took in skoyne
the wordys of the holy man & yfor
lete us all desire hym to pray for (line 80)
us to our lorde •

but anon full
on them so great tempest that they
were in point to be lost. And then
one of them said we suffer this
great trouble for we took in scorn
the words of the holy man and therefore
let us all desire him to pray for
us to our lord

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

but anon fyll on thê (them)
so grete a tempest: that they were in paryll
for to perysshe. And thenne one of thê (them) said
we suffer this trouble be cause we had dys (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word) (line 65)
dayne of the words of yonder holy man /
And therefor lete us all mekely desire hym
to praye for us to our lord Jhesu cryste.

*but full anon on them
so great a tempest that they were in peril
for to perish. And then one of them said
we suffer this trouble because we had dis –
daine of the words of yonder holy man
and therefore let us all meekly desire him
to pray for us to our lord Jesus Christ*

Almost immediately, ‘but full anon on them’, as both texts announce, the tempest blows up, setting the merchants in terrible danger. As with the previous choice of synonyms to describe the merchants’ attitude to Aldhelm ‘scorn’ or disdain’ by each text, so with the description of the ferocity of the storm. The MS 72: ‘so great tempest that they were in point to be lost’, Caxton: ‘so great a tempest that they were in peril for to perish’.

In their stricken state, it falls to one of the merchants to realise the cause of the tempest and to fervently suggest a solution. The MS 72: ‘And then one of them said we suffer this great trouble for we took in scorn the words of the holy man’. Caxton: ‘And then one of them said we suffer this trouble because we had disdain of the words of yonder holy man’, Note both texts again refer to Aldhelm as a ‘holy man’, a reiteration of a previous statement by both, only this time it appears to be given more credence as it is uttered from the mouth of a repentant sinner. The merchants’ solution to their calamitous situation is clearly indicated as he declares: the MS 72: ‘and therefore let us all desire him to pray for us to our lord’. Caxton: ‘and therefore let us all meekly desire him to pray for us to our lord Jesus Christ’.

Here the merchant is not suggesting praying to the Lord directly for mercy from the storm, but beseeching Aldhelm to intercede on their behalf, with Caxton adding the word ‘*meekly*’ to emphasise their now humble appeals for help. Thus, Caxton, via the pleading merchant, identifies Aldhelm as an intercessor which further endorses him as a holy man and a saint.

William dedicates a notable amount of his text to describing the tempest, for example, ‘The fury of the winds and the whistling in the rigging redoubled their terror’.¹¹³ Faricius, instead, focuses more on Aldhelm’s peaceful persona as the storm rages. Both agree that the turning point came in the plight of the sailors when one of the crew realise their mistake in deriding a man of God and that the tempest was God’s retribution. The man pleads to the other sailors to pray to Aldhelm for salvation. Faricius offers that the merchants were ‘full of remorse for their pride and lack of humility’, in perhaps a veiled reference to Aldhelm’s writing on the dangers of pride in his *De virginitate*.¹¹⁴ William claim the sailors ‘begged for help and promised amendments’.¹¹⁵ The MS 72 and Caxton clearly echo the primary source content in this regard. Faricius and William then focus on Aldhelm’s saintly qualities a personality trait in that Aldhelm had no animosity towards the men; Faricius tells that he acted out of love for them in the supernatural act of performing a miracle that calms the storm and saves the merchants’ lives and souls.

Biblical antecedents for divine intervention in stormy seas can be found in Psalms 107: 23-32 which applies the topos as a metaphor advising the faithful that to supplicate in prayer in times of turbulence will bring divine deliverance. The same narrative is then employed in the New Testament where Jesus reveals his power of divinity by calming the terrifying storm on the sea of Galilee, as reported by Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 8: 22-25. Each account relates the disciples’ plight and subsequent supplication to Jesus. Mark’s narrative subtly highlights the audience of the miracle. After dispersing the crowd, therefore no grand audience, the disciples and ‘other little ships’ set out to sea. Perhaps a select audience composed of later narrators. Each account is astonished at Christ’s supernatural command over nature, below demonstrated by Luke:

‘And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord save us: we perish’.¹¹⁶

Matthew 8:25

¹¹³ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 257.

¹¹⁴ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 367. For translation of *De virginitate* see Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, trans., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 59-132.

¹¹⁵ Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 257.

¹¹⁶ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p. 955.

‘And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships’.¹¹⁷

Mark 4:36

‘And they came to him and awoke him saying, master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm’.¹¹⁸

Luke 8:24

A. Lawrence-Mathers in his analysis of Bede’s life of Saint Cuthbert (634–687) notes that Bede added extra miracles to Cuthbert’s early life, one of which involves a tempest at sea.¹¹⁹ Cuthbert’s fellow monks were using a raft for transport that was swept out to sea in a tumultuous storm. Cuthbert stood by the shore surrounded by jeering onlookers at the fate of his friends. Here are reminiscent echoes of the Dover tempest, the same protagonist, the saint, but other participants playing different roles. Despite the mocking crowd, Cuthbert prayed for the tempest to cease and the calmed sea safely returned the monks to shore. The once disdainful throng were enlightened and humbled by the miracle, similar to Aldhelm’s intervention via prayer regarding the tempest causing a change of spiritual awareness in former scornful characters. The inclusion of the tempest miracle by the MS 72 and Caxton could be an attempt to raise the profile of Aldhelm by including an account that is similar to that written by the better-known Bede. Other such accounts of miracles involving a storm at sea, a holy person and divine miraculous intervention including numerous accounts of a light appearing on the masthead indicating the miraculous. For example, a ship carrying a holy abbot was heading for England, when a storm raged the sailors prayed to various saints for salvation, but the abbot urged them to pray to Mary, thus the light appeared and they were saved.¹²⁰

There is also an account of French clergymen travelling France and to England with relics of the Virgin they had salvaged from their burned church at Lyon. Their intention was to raise money by the miracles the relics engendered to raise money to build a new church. They boarded a ship bound for Dover which included rich merchants and their wares. During

¹¹⁷ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p.989.

¹¹⁸ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, p.1021.

¹¹⁹ A. Lawrence-Mathers, ‘Bede, St Cuthbert and the Science of Miracles’, *Reading Medieval Studies*, 45 (2019): 3–28.

¹²⁰ The Oxford Cantigas de Santa Maria Database: http://csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.php?p=poem_list&keyword=95 [consulted 2nd November 2020].

the voyage, the ship was pursued by pirates and the Dean, Master Bernaldo, held up the relics in a plea to the Virgin for help, the merchants made offerings of their luxurious goods to the relics. A tempest enraged and the brigands were capsized, and the calmed sea headed the ship to the safety of Dover. Yet, the merchants quickly forgot the desperate offerings they had made and made to disembarked with all of their rich wares.

Dean Bernaldo reminded them of the sacred oath they had made to the Virgin and vowed to donate on their return from trade. However, after purchasing wool the merchants boarded a separate ship and attempted to evade their sacred payment. The account then has Christ, in defence of his mother's betrayal, sends a thunderbolt to destroy the wool. The merchants repent and duly offer recompense to the clergyman, who whilst scolding them, only took part of what they offered. Whilst the Virgin is not involved in accounts of Aldhelm's Dover Tempest Miracle, there are parallels with this event and Aldhelm's in location, the English Channel and the port of Dover, the storm itself, reluctant and repentant merchants, and a forgiving cleric.¹²¹

The answer to the conundrum of the appearance of the sudden storm lies in the merchants' pleas for intercession. Although the verb 'intercede' is not included in the text as part of the merchants' plaintive cries, it is clear a third party is involved which has caused the tempest. As a result of the merchants' derogatory verbal attack on Aldhelm, plus the subject of the exchange being holy objects of the Church, the storm can be seen as direct Divine retribution, which, in this case, only Aldhelm's prayerful intercession could quell. William confirms this William clearly states the cause of the tempest 'But it was not long before the vengeance of the Lord sharply punished the insult done to the saint'.¹²²

Still, what would compel Aldhelm to intercede since he had just been humiliated and scorned? There is evidence of the nature of holiness in Aldhelm's action, the third level of wonder, the supernatural utilised to save souls both bodily and spiritually, for without the tempest there would not follow salvation. Neither the MS 72 nor Caxton mention the event as a miracle, nor do Faricius or William, yet the event clearly has such connotations and is intended to be read as such.

¹²¹ The Oxford Cantigas de Santa Maria Database: http://csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.php?p=poeam_list&keyword=95 [consulted 3rd November 2020].

¹²² Preest, trans., *Gesta* p. 257.

The Denouement of the Miracle

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

And than they did

so and anoon the tempest sessyd &
than they come to thys holy man
& brought him a fayre Bible the
whiche is yet at Malmsbury too (line 85)
thys day// *

and then they did

*so and anon the tempest ceased and
then they cam to this holy man
and brought him a fair Bible the
which is yet at Malmesbury to
this day*

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

they dyd soo & anon the tempest ceased.
and thenne they came to thys holy man / (line 70)
& brought to hym a ful fayre Bible y^c (that) why (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)
che is yet at Malmesbury unto thys daye /

*they did so and anon the tempest ceased
and then they came to this holy man
and brought to him a full fair Bible that whi –
ch is yet a Malmesbury unto this day.*

Clearly, the merchants' prayers have been answered as 'the tempest ceased' as both texts declare. To add credence to the beliefs of the merchants that Aldhelm had saved them, they then approach him with a gift of spiritual thanks as both texts report: 'and then they came to this holy man and brought to him a full fair Bible'. Therefore, not only have the merchants been saved by Aldhelm, clearly indicated in the text by their subsequent action, as to initiate the miracle, but also there is now another physical 'relic' associated with Aldhelm to accompany the chasuble, a full fair Bible. Faricius and William both give a physical description of the Bible as 'the Old and New Testament bound together'.

The MS 72 and Caxton both have this sacred artefact take up its rightful place at Malmesbury, along with the chasuble, 'which is yet at Malmesbury to this day'. Faricius and William both attest that the Bible was taken to Malmesbury. The outcome of this event, whilst not directly described as miraculous, is further evidence of Aldhelm's holiness regarding performing miracles, in particular in England, and the acquisition of a holy relic which was involved in the occasion of the miracle and is housed as such at Malmesbury. William, rather ambiguously, ends with 'The book can still be seen at Malmesbury today, providing a venerable specimen of antiquity'. Thus, according to William, the Bible's status as a sacred holy relic appears to have had its holiness downgraded somewhat over time, in his wording at least, despite its lasting significance to pilgrims.¹²³

Nevertheless, as the *Legenda aurea* versions of the life of Saint Aldhelm and primary sources claim, from the seventh century, the time of Aldhelm, to the fifteenth century, the time of the manuscripts, the venerated objects of the chasuble and the Bible have remained at Malmesbury. Inevitably, it seems, over the space of seven hundred years, this medieval period would have seen many pilgrims, and indeed merchants, flock to the Abbey at Malmesbury to witness the relics and pray to Aldhelm for intercession, just as the merchants did on their storm-tossed ship.

¹²³ Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Are Things Indifferent? How Objects Change Our Understanding of Religious History', *German History*, 34.1 (2016): 88–112.

The Nature of Holiness in Aldhelm's Youth, Early Education, and Elevation to Bishop

The first section of this chapter has analysed the nature of holiness specific to the performance of miracles in the life of Saint Aldhelm in the three fifteenth century Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*, whilst considering the content of the primary sources of Faricius and William. Discounting Bede in this instance as he has no record of miracles attributed to Aldhelm. The second part will move on to analyse the nature of holiness from the perspective of Aldhelm's persona. Evidence of the nature of Aldhelm's holiness in the texts will be focused on his youth and early education, followed by his elevation to the role of bishop.

Youth and Early Education

In order to create the backdrop to Aldhelm's youth and education, it is important to highlight his lineage and parental status. Lineage emphasises and prepares his standing in his holy trajectory. This information is present at the beginning of each text and can provide evidence for the direction of Aldhelm's early years.¹²⁴

Royal Blood

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

Seynt Aldelme was born of the roial blode of
Ingelonde whos fadir kyth kenter brothir
vuto kyng Ine a man right devoute vnto
godward and in Admynistration of worldely occupations
right prudent manhe and wife onteward this Aldehelme (line 5)

Saint Aldhelm was born of the royal blood of

¹²⁴ See Chapter Seven Comparative Transcription, section Royal Blood.

*England whose father kith to kenton (was)brother
unto king Ine a man right devout unto
godward and in administration of worldly occupations
right prudent man he and wife towards Aldhelm.*

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

_seynt Aldelyne the confesso^r
was bore in Inglonde • ††
ffadir kyth Kentoⁿ he was
the kingis brother of this londe þat
was †clifnd† Ine and when the kynge (line 5)
was deed thys Kentoⁿ was made kynge
after him • //

Saint Aldhelm the Confessor

*was born in England
father kith Kenton he was
the king's brother of this land that
was called Ine and when the king
was dead this Kenton was made king after him.*

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

SAynt Aldeme the confessour was
born in englonde. Hys fader kyth
kenton / he was broder unto Iue kynge of
thys Iⁿ(n)ode / and whan kynge Iue was deed
kenton was made kyng after hym. (line 5)

*Saint Aldhelm the confessor was
born in England. His father kith to
kenton he was brother unto Ine king of
this land and when king Ine was dead
kenton was made king after him*

The introduction to Aldhelm by all three manuscripts centres upon his English royal blood, informing of the kinship between Aldhelm's father Kenton and his relationship as royal brother to King Ine. Even though it is only the Abbotsford MS that uses the term 'Royal Blood', the MS 72 and Caxton run identically together with the royal theme also offering the reader that when the King dies Aldhelm's father becomes King. The MS 72: 'and when the king was dead this Kenton was made king after him'. Caxton: '*and when the king was dead this Kenton was made king after him*'. Note that Aldhelm's father Kenton is named twice by both the MS 72 and Caxton. Thus, suggesting that the royal status of their subject, Aldhelm, was of more importance to the anonymous author of the MS 72 and to Caxton than to that of the Abbotsford MS.

In analysis of the primary sources regarding Aldhelm's royal blood, Bede in the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, the original source for Aldhelm's story, does not refer to Aldhelm's royal birth. Instead, Bede focuses on Aldhelm's status as bishop and of his writings.¹²⁵ However, a link is to be found regarding Aldhelm's royal blood in Bede's chapter of the kings of the West Saxons. 'King Cadwalla (659–689) passed on his throne to Ine 'who was of royal blood', in 688, to travel on pilgrimage to Rome'.¹²⁶ Thus, confirming Aldhelm's royal connection in the form of King Ine who is mentioned in all three manuscripts as being Aldhelm's uncle. As stated previously in this chapter, regarding a key reason for Aldhelm's pilgrimage to Rome, Bede informs readers that King Cadwalla was baptised in Rome and is buried in Saint Peter's Church, recording the epitaph that was carved for the abdicated King.

¹²⁵ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 298–299.

¹²⁶ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 276.

Faricius begins the *Vita Aldhelmi* by lauding Aldhelm's genealogy, claiming that King Ine was 'valiant, virtuous, and religious'. Regarding Kenton, stated by Faricius as the King's brother and father of Aldhelm, he is declared to be 'a man of excellent character and holiness'.¹²⁷ William, on the other hand, in his chapter 188 'Aldhelm's Descent from the West Saxons', disputes the direct line of lineage. Whilst agreeing that Kenton was Aldhelm's father, William claims that Kenton could not have been brother to King Ine, 'seems to me to square more with fickle rumour than with facts of history'.¹²⁸ William adds evidence to validate his doubt by quoting The Handbook of King Alfred as clearly stating that Kenton was first cousin to King Ine.¹²⁹ William further explains that the 'chronicles' he consulted state that the only brother King Ine had was named Ingeld, who died before the King.¹³⁰

Thus, William is disputing Faricius's claim regarding Aldhelm's royal line; Faricius does not state his sources. William does not specify which further chronicles he consulted, which by his own admission were sparse. Michael Swanton's translation of eight Anglo-Saxon Chronicles has the earliest chronicle, The Winchester Manuscript, Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 173, dated in the ninth century, mention Ingeld († 718) as being the brother of Ine (688–726).¹³¹ This chronicle is the only one to contain the name Ingeld; there is no mention of a Kenton in that or any of the other chronicles.

The appearance of the name Ingeld strongly indicates that the Winchester Manuscript was one of the chronicles that William may have researched. However, the document also names Aethelheard as succeeding to Ine's throne where he ruled for fourteen years.¹³² In his *De Gesta Regum Anglorum* [The Deeds of the Kings of England] William notes King Aethelheard as cousin of Ine and succeeding his throne.¹³³ Thus, further suggesting that the Winchester Manuscript was one of the chronicles William consulted, why then does he not mention Aethelheard in his account of Aldhelm's ancestry? Perhaps because Aethelheard is not mentioned in the chronicle as a direct relative of Ine, who had no offspring. Therefore,

¹²⁷ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 356.

¹²⁸ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 225.

¹²⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 225. Preest states that despite the Handbook of King Alfred being of commonplace use, containing passages of interest to King Alfred, copies are no longer extant.

¹³⁰ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 225.

¹³¹ Michael Swanton, trans and ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, (London: Phoenix Press, 1996), p. 66.

¹³² Swanton, trans and ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, p. 42.

¹³³ R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, eds., and trans., *William of Malmesbury Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2 vols., (Oxford: OUP, 1998), p. 25.

Aethelheard, having no direct royal lineage connecting to Aldhelm, would not have been considered relevant to William's objective of recording the deeds of his patron saint, Saint Aldhelm.

Despite William's protestations to the contrary, the evidence is clear from Bede that King Cadwalla passed his crown to Ine, a royal relative of Aldhelm, who in turn passed on his throne, to also embark on a pilgrimage to Rome, as Cadwalla had done. However, Bede does not specify who Ine passed the crown to, only to say 'Ine also abdicated and handed over the government to younger men'.¹³⁴

The Abbotsford MS appears not to consider royal lineage as requiring further comment, as is apparent in the absence of any reference to Aldhelm's father becoming King after the death of his brother. Instead, the Abbotsford MS immediately introduces the nature of holiness with reference to Aldhelm's father and mother, thus, setting the seal for Aldhelm's holy nature to follow. The Abbotsford MS: a man right devout unto godward and in administration of worldly occupations right prudent man he and wife towards Aldhelm. Aldhelm's father is firstly held up as a devout Christian, the primary concern, followed by his and Aldhelm's mother's admirable human qualities.

Such spiritual and earthly qualities are not given in the introduction to Aldhelm's life in either the MS 72 or Caxton. The introductions to Aldhelm offered in all three documents indicate a distinct variation in style and preferred, or known, content. Whilst the general content of all three agree, notable variations are evident, in particular with the Abbotsford MS. Aldhelm's holy persona in his youth and early education is identified extensively in the Abbotsford MS, with the principle focus on his humility. Conversely, the MS 72 and Caxton give a brief characteristically unembellished description of Aldhelm's early education, then to his elevation to Abbot in the space of four lines. The Abbotsford MS dedicates forty-one lines to arrive at the same juncture as the other two documents, that of Aldhelm's advancement to abbot. The forty-one lines are dense with reference to Aldhelm's holiness.

¹³⁴ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p.276.

The Nature of Holiness in Aldhelm's Youth

For the purpose of clarity, this section will first examine the MS 72 and Caxton's brief account of Aldhelm's youth, followed by an analysis of the lengthy account offered by the Abbot'sford MS.¹³⁵

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

And than thye holy
childe Aldelyne was set to scole in
the howse of Malmesbury • Where he
was made afterward abbot and than

(line 10)

he dyd there greet coste in byldyng
and made there a ful tyall abbey

and then the holy

*child Aldhelm was sent to school in
the house of Malmesbury where he
was made abbot and then
he did there great cost in building
and made there a full tall abbey*

Caxton fols 186^v – 187^r

And (line 5)
then̄ e thys holy chylde Aldelme was lette
to scole in the hows of Malmesburye. whe//

¹³⁵ See Chapter Seven Comparative Transcription section two 'Aldhelm's youth'.

re after ward he was abbot. And then e he
dyde there grete coste in byldyng: and dyde
do make there a full tyall abbey / (line 10)

and

then this holy child Aldhelm was sent

to school in the house of Malmesbury whe –

re afterward he was made abbot. And then he

did there great cost in building and did

do make there a full tall abbey

Here the texts contain the first reference the MS 72 and Caxton give to Aldhelm as ‘holy’, the first hint that, according to their content, the subject has saintly qualities. It is also the first time the monastery at Malmesbury is mentioned by name. As observed in the previous part of the chapter regarding miracles the name Malmesbury is synonymous with Aldhelm as relics of his miracles were taken there. The MS 72: ‘and then the holy child Aldhelm was sent to school in the house of Malmesbury’. Caxton: ‘and then the holy child Aldhelm was sent to school in the house of Malmesbury’.

However, nothing is said of his experience at school in the monastery, his attitude, his accomplishments, or more, the nature of his holiness. Instead, both texts move directly to Aldhelm becoming an abbot and building a tall Abbey at great cost. This too sees both texts focusing on status. The MS 72: ‘where he was made abbot and then he did there great cost in building and made there a full tall abbey’. Caxton: ‘where afterward he was made abbot. And then he did there great cost in building and did make there a full tall abbey’. Again, Caxton’s content is in full alliance with the MS 72, if not almost identical.

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

whan he came past childehode by his fadir and his eem
was putt to lerne liberal sciencis In which withyn
short time he p(ro)ftied so that nat oonly he was compa //

able to his maistris which he had bothe in grke and
 in latyne but (m)eke to all mennys estimation superior (line 10)
 cellid hem so apt was his witt in lernyng and his
 mynde in kepyng of that he levnyd *

when he came past childhood by his father and his uncle ¹³⁶
was put to learn liberal sciences In which within
short time he profited so that not only was he compa –
rable to his masters which he had both in greek and
latin but meek to all men's estimation superior
called him so apt was his wit in learning and his
mind in keeping of that he learned

The Abbotsford MS informs the reader that in his early youth, Aldhelm ‘was put to learn’ but does not specify where or by whom. Was his initial education in the royal household, as is often the case with children of royal blood, or was the young Aldhelm sent elsewhere not directly sent to the monastery at Malmesbury for his education as stated in the MS 72 and Caxton. Faricius offers that Aldhelm’s father Kenton was an excellent translator of the English language, thus highlighting the educational standard of the royal household.¹³⁷ Also mentioning Aldhelm’s father, William states ‘His father, being of good sense and conscious of his noble birth, sent Aldhelm to learn his letters not at the school of some inferior teacher but at the hands of Hadrian Abbot of Saint Augustine’s (anyone who has read *The Deeds of the English* will know that Hadrian’s learning towered above the rest)’.¹³⁸ Here William is referring to his *De Gesta Regum Anglorum* [The Deeds of the Kings of England], which he

¹³⁶ ‘eem’ is Middle English for ‘uncle’, A.L. Mayhew and Walter W. Skeat *A Concise Dictionary of Middle English from AD 1150 to 1580*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), p.71.

¹³⁷ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 356.

¹³⁸ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 225. See also William of Malmesbury *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2 vols., eds., and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, (Oxford: OUP, 1998), pp. 1–12. See also Michael Lapidge, ‘Hadrian’, in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes, and Donald Scragg, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 225–226. Also, Michael Lapidge, ‘Theodore’, in *The*

wrote prior to his *The Deeds of the Bishops of England*, in the document William informs that Hadrian, of African descent, along with Theodore of Tarsus, who spoke Greek, established a school at Canterbury which became of great renown in the field of Latin and Greek tutorage.

Therefore, William is declaring that rather than being educated in the royal household Aldhelm was sent to Canterbury. In his *The Deeds of the Bishops of England* William applauds Aldhelm's achievement in learning whilst in Canterbury: 'As a boy there he learnt his Latin and Greek and soon so distinguished himself that his teachers themselves marvelled. When he was now a little older he returned from Canterbury to the West Saxons and became a monk at the monastery of Meldunum'.¹³⁹ Meldunum, William informs, is the earlier name for Malmesbury. Bede names it as 'Maelduib's town' after the Irish founder monk.¹⁴⁰ Faricius refers to the Latin name for Malmesbury 'Meldunensis'.¹⁴¹

As stated earlier, Bede has no mention of Aldhelm's youth or education, but does acclaim his intellectual skills as a writer in his adult life.¹⁴² Faricius, in mentioning Aldhelm's remarkable skills and knowledge as a pupil, states that such astute wisdom is both for and from God.¹⁴³ Faricius does not mention Canterbury, nor Hadrian or Theodore as Aldhelm's educators by name, yet he does mention two skilled 'doctors' who taught Aldhelm letters and were impressed by his erudite ability in studying.¹⁴⁴

The Abbotsford MS echoes Faricius and William's praise of Aldhelm's ability in his studies, claiming that he swiftly became on par with his tutors in terms of knowledge of Latin and Greek, and later with liberal sciences, the Abbotsford MS: 'when he came past childhood by his father and his uncle was put to learn liberal sciences In which within short time he profited so that not only was he comparable to his masters which he had both in greek and latin ...'. Here the Abbotsford MS suggests an educational timeline in that Aldhelm first studied Greek and Latin, at which he excelled, followed by education in the liberal sciences where he also achieved equal prowess. William offers a more succinct timeline: '... he added liberal arts to his already copious knowledge. Indeed in order to drink in these arts to the full,

Wiley Blackwell *Encyclopaedia of Anglo Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes, and Donald Scragg, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 444–446.

¹³⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, pp. 225–226.

¹⁴⁰ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 298.

¹⁴¹ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 358.

¹⁴² Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 299.

¹⁴³ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 357.

¹⁴⁴ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 357.

he studied for a second time in Canterbury at the feet of Hadrian'.¹⁴⁵ Thus, declaring that having already studied at Canterbury, then at Malmesbury where he became a monk, Aldhelm returned to Canterbury to continue his studies in the liberal arts. William verifies this by quoting from Aldhelm's letter to Hadrian stating this fact.¹⁴⁶ Yet, in the Abbotsford MS Aldhelm's widely held 'meek' nature is equally highlighted. The Abbotsford MS: 'but meek to all men's estimation superior called him so apt was his wit in learning and his mind in keeping of that he learned'. Aldhelm's humility is then further emphasised:

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

and notwithstanding //

dyng thus he worshipid evir benygnely and lowly his
maistris as his betters • nev nevir was pronde ne boste //
ful of his li^uuyng • but in that evir he did or seid he (line 15)
mekely and prudently bihav hym to almaner people

and not withstand –

*ding thus he worshipped ever benignly and lowly his
masters as his betters. Never never was proud nor boast –
full of his learning but in that ever he did or said he
meekly and prudently behave him to all manner people*

In the Abbotsford MS, the nature of Aldhelm's holiness is central in the description of his youth and early education. Such words as 'benignly' and 'lowly' 'never never was proud nor boastful' with reference to Aldhelm's attitude towards his tutors despite him excelling at his studies to their level. Yet, the text also tells the reader that Aldhelm's holy nature was not kept exclusively for his masters but that he behaved this way to 'all manner of people' re-

¹⁴⁵ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 226.

¹⁴⁶ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, pp. 226. For Aldhelm's Letter to Hadrian, see Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009), p. 153.

gardless of status. The Abbotsford MS: ‘but in that ever he did or said he meekly and prudently behave him to all manner people’. Abbotsford MS now takes the reader from Aldhelm’s early youth to his adolescence:

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

And whan he was passed his adolescencye and atten //
ned to the age which is clepid iuventus
youth he a //
noon forsoke al the worlde and all the vanitee therof
and was made a muⁿke monasteiro

meduliensi (line 20)
and fist a preste and aftir by presse of tyme abbot

*and when he was passed his adolescence and atten –
ded to the age which is called young man or
youth he a –
non forsook all the world and all the vanity thereof
and was made a monk [at the] monastery
Malmesbury
And first a priest and by press of time an abbot*

After his fruitful early education, Aldhelm then enters the monastery at Malmesbury. According to the text he did this at his own volition and with conviction. The Abbotsford MS: ‘he anon forsook all the world and all the vanity thereof and was made a monk [at the] monastery Malmesbury’. The text then informs of Aldhelm’s ecclesiastical elevation from monk to priest to abbot. The Abbotsford MS: ‘and first a priest and by press of time abbot’. This information echoes Bede who mentions Aldhelm becoming a priest then Abbot at the

monastery at Malmesbury. Now the Abbotsford MS has Aldhelm in location, Malmesbury, and ecclesiastical rank, monk, in agreement with the MS 72 and Caxton.

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

in
the same monastery where his
conuersacion was such
that all his werkys savoured hevenly ffor what so evir
he did charitte bigan his werk and mekenesse ended it
wherefore the fame of his demenyng and of his holy (line 25)
living diffoundid was •

in
the same monastery where his
conversation was such
that all his works had a heavenly savour for whatsoever
he did charity began his work and meekness ended it
wherefore the fame of his demeanour and of his holy
living spread far and wide

Unlike the MS 72 and Caxton, the Abbotsford MS does not specifically identify the ‘works’ that Aldhelm carried out at Malmesbury as building a costly Abbey. The text acknowledges his works but again places emphasis on his holy nature. The Abbotsford MS: ‘that all his works favoured heavenly’. The text states that, as with his attitude to his studies, Aldhelm applied himself diligently and successfully, yet with a holy nature. The MS 72: ‘whatsoever he did charity begin his work and meekness ended it’, Thus, Aldhelm’s holiness is confirmed by the Abbotsford MS in the epitome of his spiritual nature, the alpha and the

omega revealed in his magnanimous state of charity in all his works, and the humble state of meekness at the finish, despite knowledge of his holiness being of renown.¹⁴⁷

Elevation to the Role of Bishop

With reference to bishop saints in the medieval period, Hahn notes that a confessor's life, denoted as monk, royal saint, or bishop, unlike martyrs, require their biographer to reiterate evidence of the saint's holiness in order to reassert the claim.¹⁴⁸ This observation appears to be the case in the three fifteenth-century lives of Saint Aldhelm in varying degrees both in his personality traits and his performance of miracles. Regarding bishops and their miracles, Hahn describes the 'apostolic model', the epitome of ecclesiastical sainthood, as possessing three appointed qualities: preaching, baptising, and the performance of miracles.¹⁴⁹ This apostolic model somewhat echoes that of earlier bishops in late antiquity, Claudia Rapp states that a bishop's holiness was defined as 'being endowed with special spiritual gifts of teaching, prayer, and miracle working'.¹⁵⁰

Hahn emphasises that in order to achieve the apostolic model the miracles should, by and large, be those of healing, thereby reflecting the restorative miracles of Christ. However, contrary to the 'requirement' of the miracle of a confessor to be of a healing nature, none of the miracles performed by Aldhelm, neither as abbot in Rome nor as bishop in England pertain to healing. The chasuble, baby, and tempest miracles, plus the fragment of the wooden beam miracle, all appear to demonstrate the spectacular rather than adhering to Aldhelm's renowned humility, which would lend itself to the holy nature of healing miracles. Tentatively, Aldhelm's miracles could be considered as resolution miracles; a miraculous solution to a problem involving objects, or personages in the case of the baby, of ecclesiastical importance. Rachel Koopmans points to the plot line of miracle collections *per se* 'problem, divine intervention, solution', citing Osbern's writings of Saint Dunstan in the eleventh century involving prayers to the saint which miraculously provide a vision and win a legal battle in favour

¹⁴⁷ For the use of 'meek' in Middle English, see Merridee L. Bailey, 'Early English Dictionaries and the History of Meekness', *Philological Quarterly*, 98. 3 (2019): 243–271.

¹⁴⁸ Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart*, p. 129.

¹⁴⁹ Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart*, p. 153.

¹⁵⁰ Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2013), p. 64. See also, Constance B. Bouchard, 'Episcopal 'Gesta' and the Creation of a Useful past in Ninth-Century Auxerre' *Speculum*, 84.1 (2009): 1–35

of the prayerful petitioner, in particular the case of the knight of Thanet.¹⁵¹ Saint Dunstan was abbot, bishop, and finally Archbishop of Canterbury, thereby fitting the role of confessor and the apostolic model.

As mentioned earlier, Aldhelm's return to England from Rome caught the attention of Brightwolde, Archbishop of Canterbury, due to his holy living. The nature of such holy living, or holiness itself, appears twofold in the three fifteenth-century manuscripts evidenced as personality trait, and miraculous performances. Whilst all three manuscripts attest to Aldhelm's sanctity in the form of miracles, Abbotsford singularly highlights Aldhelm's holiness in the nature of his personality:

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

ynough thus and many othir wises the life of this
blissid man was so redolent in virtues that all the hors
of god was fulfilled with the odour of the opinion of
the fame of his gode name

*enough thus and many otherwise the life of this
blessed man was so redolent in virtues that all the honours
of god was fulfilled with the odour of the opinion of
the fame of his good name*

The nature of Aldhelm's holiness is here given resounding endorsement: the Abbotsford MS: 'this blessed man was so redolent in virtues'. The use of the word 'redolent' is key to evidence of holiness in describing Aldhelm as it points to the odiferous sign of sanctity, *osmogenesia*. The text further adds that Aldhelm's virtuous nature was widely renowned. The Abbotsford MS: 'all the honours of god was fulfilled with the odour of the opinion of the fame of his good name' Again the word 'odour' indicates the sweet smell of sainthood.

¹⁵¹ Rachel Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 2011), pp. 28–30.

Vauchez points out that whilst the odour of sanctity primarily appears after a saint's death it can also be present during their life.¹⁵²

The style in the Abbotsford MS specific to Aldhelm's redolent holiness is not dissimilar to that of Aldhelm's which contains examples of lives of saints for readers to aspire towards. For example, Aldhelm's description of Saint Ambrose 'I shall not indeed allow Ambrose, redolent with the ambrosia of heavenly nectar, to lie hidden behind a veil of silence', he also speaks of Ambrose's 'mellifluous sweetness of doctrine'.¹⁵³ It is tempting, therefore, to suggest that the author of the Abbotsford MS may have used Aldhelm's own writing as a source to inspire their own style to echo the saint's outpouring of eloquent description when writing of saints himself.

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

of mete drynke he was right abstinent
and to slepe he was ful loth more than nature affid
of meat drink he was right abstinent
and to sleep he was full loathe more than nature afford

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

In redyng and preyeng he was most occupied evin
following pees and fleeyng strifes • a lover of pacy // (line 65)
ence and a follower of mansuetude and of benignesse
and forto seyn al compendiously there was no thying
in hym neither worde nor werk but it savoured goste //
ly and godly

In reading and praying he was most occupied even

¹⁵² Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 428. Regarding the origin of odour and Christianity see also, Lionel Rothkrug, 'The 'Odour of Sanctity' and the Hebrew Origins of Christian Relic Veneration', *Historical Reflexions*, 8. 21 (1981): 95–142. Regarding senses and sanctity See also, Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living St in Christian Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p.16.

¹⁵³ Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, trans., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), p. 84.

*following peace and fleeing strife. A lover of pati –
ence and a follower of gentleness and of benignity/good will
and for to saying al succinctly there was no thing
in him neither word nor work but it savoured spiritual –
-ly and godly.*

At this point, near the end of the text, the Abbotsford MS offers a resounding summary of the nature of Aldhelm's holiness, specifically regarding his abstinence, reading and praying, which he adheres to diligently despite even the most pressing distractions. The Abbotsford MS: 'In reading and praying he was most occupied even following peace and fleeing strife'. His peaceful nature is then highlighted by the use of 'pacyence', patience, and 'mansuetude', gentleness, and 'benignesse' [good will].¹⁵⁴ The Abbotsford MS: 'A lover of patience and a follower of gentleness and of 'benignesse'. The endorsement of Aldhelm's holiness finishes by emphasising that not only was he concise in his speech but in both word and deed Aldhelm's constant focus was heavenward. The Abbotsford MS: and for to saying al succinctly there was no thing in him neither word nor work but it savoured spiritually and godly. Again, sensory perception of holiness is mentioned as previously with 'redolent' and 'odour' here in the use of the word 'savoured'. Rachel Fulton speaks of the 'flavour of God' quoting psalm 33:9: 'taste and see that the Lord is sweet', as with smell, a metaphysical taste denotes holiness.¹⁵⁵

As previously highlighted, Aldhelm entered the monastery at Malmesbury where he rose through the ecclesiastical ranks from monk to priest to abbot. As illustrated Abbot Aldhelm was then called to Rome. Thereafter, on his return to England, Aldhelm was given the position of counsellor to Archbishop Brightwolde.¹⁵⁶ All three codices declare that Aldhelm was ordained bishop late in life:

The Abbotsford MS fols 110^r – 111^v

¹⁵⁴Middle English Dictionary, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary> [consulted 5th August 2020].

¹⁵⁵ Rachel Fulton, 'Taste and See That the Lord Is Sweet' (Ps. 33:9): The Flavor of God in the Monastic West', *The Journal of Religion*, 86. 2 (2006): 169–204.

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix C section eleven 'Final Years'.

and whan he long had continued thus
abouten the yere of our lorde seven hundred and five (line 70)
when hedda the bishop was and his diocese
divided
into two • blissid Aldehelme was chosen to govern oon
of the which when he had kept

*and when he long had continued thus
about the year of our lord seven hundred and five
when hedda the bishop was and his diocese
divided
into two. Blessed Aldhelm was chosen to govern one
of the which when he had kept*

The MS 72 fols 244^v – 245^r

And he was made
bysschop of ~~worset~~^f iiij yeer before
he dyed by Brightwold arche bisshop
of caⁿnturbury • & by seynd Egwine
bishop of worsett^r

*And he was made bishop of ~~worcester~~ four year before
he died by Brightwolde archbishop
of Canterbury. And by saint Egwine
bishop of worcester*

Caxton's fols 186^v – 187^r

& four yere before hys deth he was maad
Bysshop of dorset by the archebyssop of
caunterbury / & by other bysshopes

and four year before his death he was made

bishop of dorset by the archbishop of

Canterbury and by other bishops

As highlighted earlier, each manuscript has Aldhelm becoming bishop four years before he dies in 709, having returned from Rome in 705 four years after the death of Pope Sergius. On his return from Rome Aldhelm not only carried with him privileges from the Pope for his abbey in Malmesbury, but also physical evidence of the chasuble miracle he performed there, the chasuble itself, this was soon to be followed by the Bible from the tempest miracle at Dover. His reputation as a holy man with the supernatural gift to carry out miracles was further expounded by word of the baby miracle, as well as his holiness of nature. The relics of the chasuble and Bible would encourage pilgrims to Malmesbury, to see or even touch them, to witness the privileges from the Pope and to hear of Aldhelm's life, no doubt readily available for a small fee from the local monks or laity.

In consulting all three documents there are inconsistencies regarding Aldhelm's elevation to bishop. The Abbotsford MS: 'when hedda the bishop was and his diocese divided into two blessed Aldhelm was chosen to govern one of the which when he had kept'. At this point the final part of the Abbotsford manuscript has been defaced, due to the cutting out of the illuminated initial letter from the previous page, therefore, there is no information to state which one of the bishoprics Aldhelm was chosen to govern. However, the division of a diocese mentioned here is confirmed by Bede in his the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, whose original account of the life of Aldhelm focuses primarily on his ecclesiastical status and his literary skills.¹⁵⁷ Bede confirms the name of bishop Haedda, as it is spelled in the

¹⁵⁷ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 298–299.

translation, and that in the event of his death, the Abbotsford MS marks this as ‘was’, the diocese in the province of the West Saxons was divided into two, one was given to Daniel, the other to Aldhelm ‘who administered it with great energy for four years’.¹⁵⁸ Note, the ‘four years’ mentioned by Bede of Aldhelm’s bishopric is echoed by all three fifteenth-century codices.

Neither the MS 72 nor Caxton mention Bishop Haedda or the division of a diocese. Moreover, their accounts appear to be not only in conflict with each other but also with unrectified error in the case of the former: the MS 72: ‘And he was made bishop of ~~woreester~~²’ and an almost hurriedly written account by the latter in which no names are given for the Archbishop of Canterbury or other senior clergy present: Caxton’s the *Golden Legende*: ‘he was made bishop of dorset by the archbishop of Canterbury and by other bishops’. The MS 72 does, however, take the time to note Brightwolde and Egwine: the MS 72: ‘Brightwolde archbishop of Canterbury. And by Saint Egwine Bishop of worcester’. Curiously, of the three documents Caxton is the only one to name which bishopric Aldhelm was given as ‘Dorset’. Bede, however, does not mention specifically the place of Aldhelm’s appointed bishopric, apart from it being in the province of the West Saxons.

Faricius and William of Malmesbury both mention the death of bishop Haedda and the division of the diocese between Daniel and Aldhelm.¹⁵⁹ They also refer to Aldhelm being ordained bishop by Berthwaldus/Berhtwald archbishop of Canterbury, named as Brightwolde by the MS 72 and Caxton.¹⁶⁰ William confirms Caxton’s claim of Aldhelm being made bishop of Dorset, as he has his chapter 223 entitled ‘Aldhelm chosen as Bishop of Sherborne’. The town of Sherborne is in the county of Dorset, furthermore, William states that in preparation for his visit to Rome, Aldhelm ‘went to the estates under his control in the county of Dorset’.¹⁶¹

William further states that Sherborne was suitable for Aldhelm as it was his birthplace, plus his advancing years. Note in his chapter title William has the date for Aldhelm’s ordination as 705, four years before Aldhelm’s death, both the MS 72 and Caxton have Ald-

¹⁵⁸ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 298.

¹⁵⁹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 255.

¹⁶⁰ J.A. Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, pp. 356–382. See also M. Winterbottom, ‘An Edition of Faricius, *Vita S. Aldhelmi*’, *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 15 (2005): 93–147.

¹⁶¹ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 248.

helm returning to England in 706 ‘this was about the year of our lord 706’. Yet, a slight discrepancy in date is negated they do both say ‘about’ which allows for a margin of error. It is to be expected that William would place great emphasis upon the event of Aldhelm’s ordination as his book is regarding the deeds of the bishops of England, in particular Aldhelm who was his patron at Malmesbury.

Conclusion

In conclusion It is important to remember that the MS 72 is the earliest of the fifteenth-century texts (1438), closely followed by the Abbotsford MS (1443–1449), whereas Caxton’s the *Golden Legende* printed version does not appear until much later (1483). It is, therefore, tempting to seek a correlation between the two earlier documents, closest in time, and to assume that Caxton will rely on their content to produce his printed text as he is not the writer but the facilitator for making the text available in a new format, print. Yet, it appears that the MS 72 and Caxton have a number of similarities, if not direct echoes of narrative, which further signifies that the MS 72 could have been one of Caxton’s English sources, or was very close to it. moreover, it appears Caxton may have been unaware of the Abbotsford MS. Furthermore, as is evidenced by the occasions of diversity of content in the texts, the authors of the MS 72 and the Abbotsford MS were most likely unaware of each other’s codex.

The nature of Aldhelm’s holiness has been revealed in all three documents, both in his supernatural performances and his personality traits. Aldhelm’s supernatural holiness appears in his performance of miracles which manifest during his time in Rome. These occur in the form of the chasuble miracle, mentioned in all three manuscripts, and the baby miracle which is exclusive to the Abbotsford MS. On Aldhelm’s return to England his sacred, supernatural gift continues to present itself with the tempest miracle, present in the MS 72 and Caxton’s the *Golden Legende*, but not in the Abbotsford MS. The Abbotsford MS, however, does briefly mention a miracle which Aldhelm performed on England’s shores. That of the wooden beam that was too short for the church he was building, discussed earlier see the Abbotsford MS line 54, a prayer and a miracle restored the beam’s true length. The account of this miracle in the manuscript is in fragment form and is incomplete due to physical damage. This miracle occurs after the baby miracle, thus confirming that Aldhelm’s pilgrimage to

Rome appears to have acted as a catalyst for his supernatural level of wonder. The complete account of this miracle is present in both Faricius and William.

Whilst there is some evidence of possible narrative strands employed from antecedents, this does not distract from the central message of the nature of Aldhelm's holiness. The saintly quality in Aldhelm's personality trait is revealed in his holy living, which is highlighted in all three documents, evident in accounts of his youth and early education. His humility, despite surpassing his masters in his education, is emphasised in the Abbotsford MS; the MS 72 and Caxton's the *Golden Legende* refer to Aldhelm directly as a 'holy child'. Cumulative evidence suggests that the nature of Aldhelm's holiness, revealed by the fifteenth century versions of the *Legenda aurea* in both his personality trait and his miraculous spiritual gift, can be held up as a *speculum* for the supernatural nature of his holiness.

Chapter Eight

Comparative Transcriptions

Introduction

The following are the individual transcriptions carried out in situ of the Life of Saint Aldhelm in the three Middle English fifteenth century versions of the *Legenda aurea*. Namely, the Abbotsford MS, attributed to an unknown scribe of Osbern Bokenham.¹ The Lambeth Palace MS 72 of an unknown scribe. The British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.11 c.16 printed edition by William Caxton. The transcriptions were realised with the kind permission of The Faculty of Advocates Abbotsford Collection Trust, Lambeth Palace, and The British Library. The identified key events, previously discussed, pertaining to the nature of holiness in the life of Saint Aldhelm, are then set out in a sectioned comparison table.

*Key for transcriptions.*²

New line as ms

Capitals as ms

Punctuation as ms

Expand abbreviations; added letters in brackets

Transcribe as normal letters those that are superscript

Record folio number in brackets

Record the beginning of a new column with a letter in brackets

†† problematic readings

[] letters cancelled by scraping

[[]] portion of text lost through damage

¹ Simon Horobin, 'A Manuscript Found in the Library of Abbotsford House and the Lost Legendary of Osbern Bokenham' *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700*, 14 (2008): 130–162.

² As suggested by Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*, (London: Cornell University Press, 2007).

**The Abbotsford MS Life of Saint Aldhelm in Middle English Fifteenth-Century Version
of the *Legenda aurea* (1443–1449)**

Transcription

Title at the top of the page:

The Lives of Aldelme (above column A)
(above column B)

Elentherie

(Column A, 55 Lines) (fols 110^r – 111^v)

Seynt Aldelme was born of the roial blode of
Ingelonde whos fadir kyth kenter brothir
vuto kyng Ine a man right devoute vuto
godward and in Admynistration of worldely occupations
right prudent manbe and wife onteward this Aldehelme
whan he came past childehode by his fadir and his eem
was putt to lerne liberal sciencis In which withyn
short time he p(ro)ftied so that nat oonly he was compa =
able to his maistris which he had bothe in gvne and
in latyne but (m)eke to all mennys estimation superior
cellid hem so apt was his witt in lernyng and his
mynde in kepyng of that he levnyd * and notwithston =
dyng thus he worshipid evir benygnely and lowly his
maistris as his betters • nev nevyr was pronde ne boste =
ful of his li⁻uyng • but in that evir he did or seid he
mekely and prudently bihad hym to almoner peple
*And whan he was passed his adolescencye and atten =
ned to the age which is clepid iuventus youth he a =
noon forsoke al the worlde and all the vanitee therof
and was made a mu⁻nke monasteiro meduliensi
and fist a preste and aftir by presse of tyme abbot in
the same monastery where his †connersacion† was such

that all his werkys savoured heavenly ffor what so evir
 he did charitte bigan his werk and mekenesse ended it
 wherefore the fame of his demenyng and of his holy
 living diffoundid was • ffor abouten not oonly in Inge =
 londe but also beyond the see and unto the courte of
 Rome whider also he went hym self where he was
 worshipfully received by the Pope which that tyme was
 depid Sergius for the opinion of his hooly living and
 god also clarified hym by myraclis werkys the use and
 custome of this hooly abbot was that whider so evir
 he went on pilgrimage he had alwey caryed with hym
 Al the ornamentus the which longen to a preste to seyn
 with a messe and oo tyme whan he had seid messe at
 seynt Johⁿ Lateranence in Rome and left of his the
 sible it happid by the providence of god that noon of
 his men was redy to takkyn it of his hand and wh^a
 he lete it goon oute of his hande bilevyng that so^r me
 man had taken it of hym sodernly a beem of the si^r me
 came in at an hole of a glasse wyndowe helde up the
 chaucible a gode while til su^r me man come and toke
 it thereof the which chaucible was afterward kept
 preciously as for a relike in monastio † meduliensi † (last two words underlined in red)
 in remembrance of the seid miracle * It happnd also
 aboute the same tyme the popis fame to ben hurt in Rome
 by the birthe of a childe whos modir was nat cured by
 an husbonde and was familiar in the popis court thus
 hevyng blissid Aldelme asked the childe but nyne day =
 es of age that he should tellen who bigat hym and anoon
 the childe comfid the Pope seid that he was nat hys
 fadir whereupon anoon the infante cesfid this man =
 nys holynesse was so grete and so axceptable in the syght

of god that oo tyme a beem which was ordeyned to
ben in the church of his monasterie and was to shorte

(At this stage column A ends as the bottom of the page has been cut out)

(Column B, 25 lines)

ynough thus and many othir wises the life of this
blissid man was so redolent in virtues that all the hous
of god was fulfilled with the odour of the opinion of
the fame of his gode name And so diligently he was
excised in fon^r al occupations that both were made to
werk he excited his subiectis to the same forme of h =
vyng of mete drynke he was right abstinent
and to slepe he was ful loth more than nature affid
In redyng and preyeng he was most occupied evin
following pees and fleeyng strifes • a lover of pacy =
ence and a follower of mansuetude and of benignesse
and forto seyn al †to^rpdendionsly† there was no thying
in hym neither worde nor werk but it savoured goste =
ly and godly and whan he long had continued thus
abouten the yere of our lorde seven hundred and five
when hedda the bishop was and his †diouse† divided
into two • blissid Aldehelme was chosen to govern oon
of the which when he had kept [[]] enforcing his people nat fer [[]]
in which a while †everased† by [[]]
might be plenerly purged he t [[]]
knade and by angels handis [[]]
the hevenly habitude and his [[]]
passion of his brethren feah [[]]
fully buried in his monasterie •

**The Lambeth Palace MS 72 Life of Saint Aldhelm in Middle English Fifteenth-Century
Version of the *Legenda aurea* (1438)**

Transcription

Title at the top of the page:

Here begynneth the life of syant Adelyne confessor

(Column A, 18 lines) (fols 244^v – 245^r)

Here begynneth the life seynt Aldelyne confessor

seynt Aldelyne the confessor

was bore in Inglonde • ††

ffadir kyth Kentoⁿ he was

the kingis brother of this londe þat

was †clepid† Ine and when the kynge

was deed thys Kentoⁿ was made kynge

aftyr him • // * And than thye holy

childe Aldelyne was set to scole in

the howse of Mayalmesbury • Where he

was made afterward abbot and than

he dyd there greet coste in byldyng

and made there a ful †tyal† abbey

and when the [pope] herde of hys

greet holynesse he sent for hym to

come to Rome • And than the [pope]

made full †meeke† of hym at hys

(Column B, 42 lines)

coming for longe tyme he dwellyd

there with the [pope] and he gate ful

greet prvelagis to the howse of Mayal //

mysbury that no byssho^p of Inglaⁿd

shulde have a doo ther nor the kyng

neyther to sette theym of theyr fre
 eleaioⁿ but for to these there abbot
 amongis theym self * And when
 he hadde gete altthere prvelegis
 of the [pope] he was ful glad & joy //
 ful and he levyd there many yeer
 in ful holy levying And than in a
 day as he seid messe in the churche
 of seynt johⁿ u latrans And when
 the messe was doone there wold no
 man take his vestement fro hym
 & than he so the sunne beme shyne
 in at an hole in the glas wyndowe
 and he hynge his chesible there on
 thatal men might se thye greet
 miracle and the same chesyple
 ys yet at Malalmesbury the colour
 there of is pirpil * and w(ithi)n
 a while aftyr he come in to Ingleⁿ d
 ayeen and brought with hym ful
 greet p^rvilegie undyr the [popes]
 seel of leed and when he come to
 the kynge Ine and to Athelred þat
 confermyd alle that the Pope hadde
 gran^t tyd to his howse of Mayalmysbu//
 ry This Was a boutte the yeare of
 owre lorde • vij^c • & vj • And than ther
 was a greet variance amonge the
 bysshoppis of this londe for the
 holdynge of Esterday but he made
 a boke that alle men schuld ††

for ever when Esterday shal be
the whiche boke ys yet at Mayalmys//
bury and this abbey he fou^{er} did in
the worshi^p of owre lady • And
Brightwolde that was than arche//
Bissho^p of Caⁿnturbury herde of
Aldelynes holy levynge & sent for
hym to be hys cou^{er} feylour and there
they levyd to gedyr many a day in
ful holy lyf and ful joyfull were
eyther of other * And in a day as
they were on the see syde by Dover
there seylid a shi^p with marchan^{er} //
dyse not fer fro the londe & than
seynt Aldelyne clepid to theym to
wyte yf they hadde any orname^{nt} t
that longid to the holy churche with in
shi^p for to selle but the mer//
chandys had scorne of hym & pougt
that he was not of power to bye suche
thyngis as they hadde & so deptyd
fro thys holy man anoon fyl
on them so greet tempest that they
were in point to be loste • and than
oone of them seide we suffer this
greet trouble fore we took in skoyne
the wordys of the holy man & yfor
lete us all desire hym to pray for
us to our lorde • And than they did
so and anoon the tempest &
than they come to thys holy man

& brought hym a fayre Bible the
 whiche is yet at Mayalmsbury too
 thys day// * And he was made
 bysschop of ~~worset~~^f iiij yeer before
 he dyed by Brightwold arche bisshop
 of caⁿnturbury • & by seynd Egwine
 bishop of worset^t and by them he was ful worshipfully brought on
 †erthe†• and yet the bisho^p Egwine
 come thedyr fadryd with cheyues
 of ioⁿu faste lockyd & fro theus he
 wente so to the Pope of Rome whiche
 was to hym a ful greet payne god
 †gvetr† him his mede * And seynt
 Aldelyne or he dyed cursid all y^e e
 that dyd euy wronge to hys seyde
 abbey of Mayalmsbury in brekyng
 of eny of ther p^rvelegis / And they y^t (that)
 helpe that howse shuld have goddis
 blessynge and hys •/And many daies
 thereaftyr he was trauslatyd & put
 worshipful shryne • Where our
 lord shewith dayly many a greet
 myracle for hys holy confessor seynt
 Aldelyne • Wherefor oure lord be pre//
 ysid worlde with owte ende • Amen •

The British Library Rare Book General Reference Collection C.11 c.16 Caxton's Printed Edition of the Life of Saint Aldhelm in Middle English Fifteenth-Century Translation of the *Legenda aurea* (1498)

Transcription

Title at the top of the page:

*Here foloweth the lyf os saynt Aldelme

Two columns of 47 lines each, plus an initial column of eight lines

(Column A, 8 lines) (fols 186^v – 187^r)

SAynt Aldeme the confessour was
born in englonde. Hys fader kyth
kenton / he was broder unto Ine kynge of
thys l̃ode / and whan kynge Ine was deed
kenton was made kyng after hym. And
theñ e thys holy chylde Aldelme was lette
to scole in the hows of Malmesburye. whe//
re after ward he was abbot. And theñ e he

(column B 47 lines)

dyde there grete coste in byldyng: and dyde
do make there a full tyall abbey / & whan
†(the) pope herde of hys grete holiness he sen//
te for hym to come to Rome. And whan
he was there. The Pope welcomed hym: and
was moche gladde of hys good lyvyng.
and there he abode longe time with the
pope & gate full grete pryvyleges and ly //
†beveots† to the hows of malmesburye in ly //
che wyle that no bishop in Englonde shol //

de vysyte ne hauc to doo there ne the kyn //
 ge to lette theym of theyr fre eleccyon: but
 chese theyr abbot emonge the couent thẽ y
 self. And whan he had gotten alle thys of
 the Pope he was full glad and joyfull / &
 lyved there ful holyly long tyme. And on
 a daye as he sayd Masse in the churche of
 saynt Johan Latrans: and whan the Masse
 was don: there was no man that wold ta //
 ke hys chesyble fro hym at the ende of the
 Masse. And thenne he saw the sonne beme
 shyne through the glasse window / & hen (note: the '//' is missing to indicated broken word)
 ge hys chesyble theron wherof alle the pe //
 ple mervylled gretely of that miracle / &
 the same chesyble is yet at Malmesbury /
 the colour therof is purple: & wythyn short
 tyme. After he came agayn in to England
 and brought wyth hym many pryuyleges
 under the Popes seal: whyche after kyng
 Iue confermed alle y^t (that) the Pope hadde grã u (note: the '//' is missing to indicated broken word)
 ted to the hows of Malmesburye. this was
 about the yere of our lorde. Vij. C. and vi.
 *And in that tyme there fyll a grete va //
 ryaunce amonge the bisshpes of this lon //
 De: for the holdyng of ester daye. But St
 Aldelme made a book that alle men shold
 knowe for ever whan ester daye shall falle
 the whyche book is yet at Malmesburye: &
 that abbay he dyde do make in y^c (that) worship
 of our blessed lady: & bryghtwold y^c (that) was
 archebisshop of Canterbury: and he sente

for hym to hys counceyllour: & they lyved
to gyder full holyly longe tyme.

*And eche was ful glad and joyefull of
Other. And on a daye as they stood at the

(Column A 47 lines, fol 187^r)

see syde by dover castell / they sawe a shyp
laden wyth marchaundyse not ferre fro
them. And saynt Aldelme called to them
to wyte yf they had ony ornament Ī ogyng
to holy churche within theyr shyp to selle:
But y^c (that) marchauntes had dysdayne of h̄y (hym)
& thought he was not of power to bye su //
che thynges as they hadde to selle & depar //
ted fro the holy man / but anon fyll on thê (them)
so grete a tempest: that they were in paryll
for to perysshe. And thenne one of thê (them) said
we suffer this trouble be cause we had dys (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)
dayne of the words of yonder holy man /
And therefor lete us all mekely desire hym
to praye for us to our lord Jhesu cryste.
they dyd soo & anon the tempest ceased.
and thenne they came to thys holy man /
& brought to hym a ful fayre Bible y^c (that) why (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)
che is yet at Malmesbury unto thys daye /
& four yere before hys deth he was maad
Bysshop of dorset by the archebyssop of
caunterbury / & by other bysshopes but wi (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)
thin shorte tyme after he deyed and lyeth
buried at Malmesbury there as he was ab (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)
bot. And after saynt Egewyn came to of (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)

fre at hys tombe feterd wyth caynes of
yuon faste locked: and fro thens he we⁻(n)te to
Rome to the Pope always werying the fe //
terys / Wyche was to hym grete payne / god
rewarde him hys mede. And saynt aldel //
me †† he deyed cursed all them y^c (that) dyde ony
wronge in brekyng of the pryvyleges of y^c (that)
sayde abbeye of Malmesbury / & them that
helpe the hous to mayntene goddess servy //
ce shall have goddess blyssyng & hys. And
whan he hadlaen longe in y^c (that) erthe he was
tra⁻slated and layed in a full ryche shrine
where as our lord sheweth dayly for his ho (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)
ly seruaunte many fayr myracles. Then (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)
ne late us praye saynt Aldelme to pray for
us unto our lord god that we may in this
wretched vale of this world soo bewaylle
our syn⁻es / & amende our lyvyng y^t (that) we may
come to everlasting lyf in heven. Amen.

Comparison Table of Transcriptions

*Key for Transcription Comparison Table*³

New line begun as with manuscript
Capitals as manuscript
Punctuation as manuscript
Spelling as manuscript
Abbreviations expanded; added letters in brackets
‘T’ used to represent abbreviation of ‘the’
‘&’ used to represent abbreviation of ‘and’
Paragraph markers as ‘*’
‘††’ problematic readings
[] letters cancelled by scraping
[[]] portion of text lost through damage

³ As suggested by Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*, (London: Cornell University Press, 2007).

Section One: *Royal Blood*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version</u> <u>BL</u>
Seynt Aldelme was born of the roial blode of Ingelonde whos fadir kyth kenter brothir vuto kyng Ine a man right devoute vuto godward and in Admynistra- tion of worldely occupations right prudent manhe and wife onteward this Alde- helme (line 5)	seynt Aldelyne the confessor was bore in Inglonde • †† ffadir kyth Kento ⁿ he was the kingis brother of this londe þat was †clepid† Ine and when the kyng (line 5) was deed thys Kento ⁿ was made kyng after him • //	SAynt Aldeme the confes- sour was born in englonde. Hys fader kyth kenton / he was broder unto Ine kyng of thys I ⁿ (n)ode / and whan kyng Ine was deed kenton was made kyng after hym. (line 5)

Section 2: *Youth*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version</u> <u>BL</u>
whan he came past childe- hode by his fadir and his eem was putt to lerne liberal sci- encis In which withyn short time he p(ro)ftied so that nat oonly he was compa // able to his maistris which he had bothe in grke and in latyne but (m)eke to all mennys estimation ††// (line 10) cellid hem so apt was his witt in lernyng and his mynde in kepyng of that he levnyd * and notwithston // dyng thus he worshipid evir benygnely and lowly his	And than thye holy childe Aldelyne was set to scole in the howse of Mayalmesbury • Where he was made afterward abbot and than (line 10) he dyd there greet coste in byldyng and made there a ful tyall abbey	And (line 5) then ^e thys holy chylde Aldelme was lette to scole in the hows of Malmesburye. whe// re after ward he was abbot. And then ^e he dyde there grete coste in byldyng: and dyde do make there a full tyall abbey / (line 10)

<p>maistris as his betters • nev nevir was pronde ne boste //</p> <p>ful of his li^uyng • but in that evir he did or seid he (line 15)</p> <p>mekely and prudently bihav hym to almaner peple</p> <p>*And whan he was passed his adolescencye and atten //</p> <p>ned to the age which is clepid iuventus</p> <p>youth he a //</p> <p>noon forsoke al the worlde and all the vanitee therof</p> <p>and was made a muⁿke monasteiro meduliensi (line 20)</p> <p>and sith a preste and aftir by presse of tyme abbot in</p> <p>the same monastery where his</p> <p>conuersacion was such</p> <p>that all his werkys savoured hevenly ffor what so evir</p> <p>he did charitte bigan his werk and mekenesse ended it</p> <p>wherefore the fame of his de- menyng and of his holy (line 25)</p> <p>living diffoundid was •</p>		
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Section 3: *Pope, Rome, and privileges*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
ffor abouten not oonly in Inge //	and when the [pope] herde of hys	& whan (line 10)
londe but also beyond the see and unto the courte of	greet holynesse he sent for hym to	†(the) pope herde of hys grete holiness he sen//
Rome whider also he went hym self where he was	come to Rome • And than the [pope] (line 15)	te for hym to come to Rome. And whan
worshipfully received by the Pope which that tyme was	made full †meeke† of hym at hys	he was there. The Pope wel- comed hym: and
clepid Sergius for the opinion of his hooly liv- ing and (line 30)	coming for longe tyme he dwellyd	was moche gladde of hys good lyvyng.
god also clarified hym by myraclis werkys the use and	there with the [pope] and he gate ful	and there he abode longe time with the (line 15)
custome of this hooly ab- bot was that whider so evir	greet p ^r velagis to the howse of Mayal //	pope & gate full grete pryv- yleges and ly //
he went on pilgrimage he had alwey caryed with hym	mysbury that no byssho ⁿ p of Ingla ⁿ (n)d (line 20)	†beveots† to the hows of malmesburye in ly //
Al the ornamentus the which longen to a preste to seyn	shulde have a doo ther nor the kyng	che wyle that no bishop in Englond shol //
with a messe	neyther to sette theym of theyr fre	de vysyte ne hauc to doo there ne the kyn //
	eleaio ⁿ but for to these there abbot	ge to lette theym of theyr fre eleccon: but (line 20)
	amongis theym self * And when	chese theyr abbot emonge the couent the ⁿ y
	he hadde gete althere p ^r velegis (line 25)	self. And whan he had gotten alle thys of
	of the [pope] he was ful glad & joy //	the Pope he was full glad and joyfull / &
	ful and he levyd there many yeer	lyved there ful holyly long tyme.
	in ful holy levying	

Section 4: *Chasuble Miracle*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
<p>and oo tyme whan he had seid messe at (line 35)</p> <p>seynt Johⁿ Lateranence in Rome and left of his chas//</p> <p>sible it happid by the providence of god that noon of his men was redy to takkyn it of his hand and wh^a</p> <p>he lete it goon oute of his hande bilevyng that so⁻ me man had taken it of hym sodernly a beem of the su⁻ ne (line 40)</p> <p>came in at an hole of a glasse wyndowe helde up the chaucible a gode while til su⁻ me man come and toke it thereof the which chaucible was afterward kept</p> <p>preciously as for a relike in <u>monastio meduliensi</u> (last two words underlined in red)</p> <p>in remembrance of the seid miracle</p>	<p>And than in a day as he seid messe in the churche</p> <p>of seynt joh⁻ u latrans And when (line 30)</p> <p>the messe was doone there wold no</p> <p>man take his vestement fro hym</p> <p>& than he so the sunne beme shyne</p> <p>in at an hole in the glas wyndowe</p> <p>and he hynge his chesible there on (line 35)</p> <p>thatal men might se thye greet miracle and the same chesyple</p> <p>ys yet at alalmesbury the colour</p> <p>there of is pirpil *</p>	<p>And on</p> <p>a daye as he sayd Masse in the churche of (line 25)</p> <p>saynt Johan Latrans: and whan the Masse</p> <p>was don: there was no man that wold ta //</p> <p>ke hys chesyble fro hym at the ende of the</p> <p>Masse. And thenne he saw the sonne beme</p> <p>shyne through the glasse window / & hen (note: the '/' is missing to indicated broken word) (line 30)</p> <p>ge hys chesyble theron wherof alle the pe //</p> <p>ple merveyllled gretely of that miracle / &</p> <p>the same chesyble is yet at Malmesbury /</p> <p>the colour therof is purple:</p>

Section 5: *Baby Miracle*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
<p>It happnd also (line 45)</p> <p>aboute the same tyme the popis fame to ben hurt in Rome</p> <p>by the birthe of a childe whos modir was nat cured by</p>		

an husbonde and was familiar in the popis court		
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<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
<p>thus</p> <p>hevyng blissid Aldelme ad- mired the childe but nyne day //</p> <p>es of age that he should tellen who bigat hym and anoon (line 50)</p> <p>the childe comfid the Pope seid that he was nat hys</p> <p>fadir whereupon anoon the in- fante cesfid</p>		

Section 6: *Return to England*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
	<p>and w⁺ (ithi)n</p> <p>a while after he come in to In- gle⁻ (n) d (line 40)</p> <p>ayeen and brought with hym ful</p> <p>greet p^rvilegie undyr the [popes]</p> <p>seel of leed and when he come to</p> <p>the kynge Ine and to Athelred þat</p> <p>confermyd alle that the Pope hadde (line 45)</p> <p>gran⁻ tyd to his howse of Ma- yalmysbu//</p>	<p>After he came agayn in to England (line 35)</p> <p>and brought wyth hym many pryuyleges</p> <p>under the Popes seal: whyche after kyng</p> <p>Ine confermed alle y^t (that) the Pope hadde gra⁻ u(n) (note: the '//' is missing to indicated broken word)</p> <p>ted to the hows of Malm- esbury. this was</p> <p>about the yere of our lorde. Vij. C. and vi.</p>

	<p>ry This Was a boutē the yeare of</p> <p>owre lorde • vij^c • & vj •</p>	
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Section 7: *Treatise on the Date of Easter*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
	<p>And than ther</p> <p>was a greet variance amonge the</p> <p>bysshoppis of this londe for the (line 50)</p> <p>holdynge of Esterday but he made</p> <p>a boke that alle men schuld ††</p> <p>for ever when Esterday shal be</p> <p>the whiche boke ys yet at Malyalmys//</p> <p>bury and this abbey he fou^r did in (line 55)</p> <p>the worshi^p of owre lady •</p>	<p>*And in that tyme there fyll a grete va //</p> <p>ryaunce amonge the bisshpes of this lon //</p> <p>De: for the holdyng of ester daye. But St</p> <p>Aldelme made a book that alle men shold</p> <p>knowe for ever whan ester daye shall falle (line 45)</p> <p>the whyche book is yet at Malmesburye: &</p> <p>that abbay he dyde do make in y^c (that) worship</p> <p>of our blessed lady</p>

Section 8: *Aldhelm becomes Counsellor to Brightwolde Archbishop of Canterbury*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
	<p>And</p> <p>Brightwolde that was than arche//</p> <p>Bissho^p of Caⁿturbury herde of</p> <p>Aldelynes holy levyng & sent for</p> <p>hym to be hys cou(n)^e seylour and there (line 60)</p> <p>they levyd to gedyr many a day in</p> <p>ful holy lyf and ful joyfull were</p> <p>eyther of other *</p>	<p>: & bryghtwold y^c (that) was archebisshop of Canterbury: and he sente</p> <p>for hym to hys counceyllour: & they lyved (line 50)</p> <p>to gyder full holyly longe tyme.</p> <p>*And eche was ful glad and joyefull of other.</p>

Section 9: *Dover Tempest Miracle*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
	<p>And in a day as</p> <p>they were on the see syde by Dover</p> <p>there seyld a shi[⁠]p with mar- chan[⁠]// (line 65)</p> <p>dyse not fer fro the londe & than</p> <p>seynt Aldelyne clepid to theym to</p> <p>wyte yf they hadde any or- name[⁠]t</p> <p>that longid to the holy churche with in</p> <p>shi[⁠]p for to selle</p>	<p>And on a daye as they stood at the</p> <p>see syde by dover castell / they sawe a shyp</p> <p>laden wyth marchaundyse not ferre fro (line 55)</p> <p>them. And saynt Aldelme called to them</p> <p>to wyte yf they had ony orna- ment l[⁠]ogyng</p> <p>to holy churche within theyr shyp to selle:</p>

Section 9: *Dover Tempest Miracle Continued*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
	<p>but the mer// (line 70)</p> <p>chandys had scorne of hym & pougt</p> <p>that he was not of power to bye suche</p> <p>thyngis as they hadde & so deptyd</p> <p>fro thys holy man ††ut anoon † fyl</p> <p>on them so greet tempest that they (line 75)</p> <p>were in point to be loste • and than</p> <p>oone of them seide we suffer this</p> <p>greet trouble fore we took in skayue</p> <p>the wordys of the holy man & yfor</p> <p>lete us all desire hym to pray for (line 80)</p> <p>us to our lorde •</p>	<p>But y^c (that) marchauntes had dysdayne of h̄y (hym)</p> <p>& thought he was not of power to bye su // (line 60)</p> <p>che thynges as they hadde to selle & depar //</p> <p>ted fro the holy man / but anon fyll on thê (them)</p> <p>so grete a tempest: that they were in paryll</p> <p>for to perysshe. And thenne one of thê (them) said</p> <p>we suffer this trouble be cause we had dys (note: the '//' is missing to indicated broken word) (line 65)</p> <p>dayne of the words of yonder holy man /</p> <p>And therefor lete us all mekely desire hym</p> <p>to praye for us to our lord Jhesu cryste.</p>

Section 9: *Dover Tempest Miracle Continued*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
	<p>And than they did</p> <p>so and anoon the tempest sessyd &</p> <p>than they come to thys holy man</p>	<p>they dyd soo & anon the tempest ceased.</p> <p>and thenne they came to thys holy man / (line 70)</p>

	& brought him a fayre Bible the whiche is yet at Malamsbury too (line 85) thys day// *	& brought to hym a ful fayre Bible y ^c (that) why (note: the '//' is missing to indicated broken word) che is yet at Malmesbury unto thys daye /
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Section 10: *Aldhelm's Holiness*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version BL</u>
ynough thus and many othir wises the life of this blissid man was so redolent in virtues that all the hous of god was fulfilled with the odour of the opinion of the fame of his gode name And so diligently he was excised in fon ^r al occupations that both were made to (line 60) werk he excited his subiectis to the same forme of h // vyng of mete drynke he was right abstinent and to slepe he was ful loth more than nature affid		

Section 10: *Aldhelm's Holiness Continued*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version</u> <u>BL</u>
<p>In redyng and preyeng he was most occupied evin</p> <p>following pees and fleeyng strifes • a lover of pacy // (line 65)</p> <p>ence and a follower of man- suetude and of</p> <p>benignesse</p> <p>and forto seyn al †to[̄]pdendi- onsly† there was no thying</p> <p>in hym neither worde nor werk but it savoured goste //</p> <p>ly and godly</p>		

Section 11: *Final Years*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version</u> <u>BL</u>
<p>and whan he long had con- tinued thus</p> <p>abouten the yere of our lorde seven hundred and five (line 70)</p> <p>when hedda the bishop was and his diocise divided</p> <p>into two • blissid Aldehelme was chosen to govern oon</p> <p>of the which when he had kept [[]]</p>	<p>And he was made</p> <p>bysschop of worset^f iiij yeer before</p> <p>he dyed by Brightwold arche bisshop</p> <p>of ca[̄]nturbury • & by seynd Egwine</p> <p>bishop of worset^f</p>	<p>& four yere before hys deth he was maad</p> <p>Bysshop of dorset by the archebyssop of</p> <p>caunterbury / & by other bysshopes</p>

Section 11: *Final Years Continued*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version</u> <u>BL</u>
<p>enforcing his people [...] []</p> <p>in which a while exercised by [] [] (line 75)</p> <p>might be plenerly purged he t (aber) [] []</p> <p>nacle and by angels handis [] []</p> <p>the hevenly habitude and his [] []</p> <p>passion of his brethren fece [] []</p> <p>fully buried in his monas- terie •</p>	<p>and by them he (line 90)</p> <p>was ful worshipfully brought on</p> <p>†erthe†•</p>	<p>but wi (note: the '//' is missing to indicated broken word) (line 75)</p> <p>thin shorte tyme after he deyed and lyeth</p> <p>buried at Malmesbury there as he was ab (note: the '//' is missing to indicated broken word)</p> <p>bot.</p>

Section 12: *Saint Egwine in Chains*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version</u> <u>BL</u>
	<p>and yet the bisho⁻ p Egwine</p> <p>come thedyr fadryd with cheyues</p> <p>of io⁻ u(n) faste lockyd & fro theus he</p> <p>wente so to the Pope of Rome whiche (line 95)</p> <p>was to hym a ful greet payne god</p> <p>†gvetr† him his mede *</p>	<p>And after saynt Egewyn came to of (note: the '//' is missing to indicated broken word)</p> <p>fre at hys tombe feterd wyth caynes of</p> <p>yuon faste locked: and fro thens he we⁻ (n)te to (line 80)</p> <p>Rome to the Pope always werying the fe //</p> <p>terys / Wyche was to hym grete payne / god</p>

		rewarde him hys mede.
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Section 13: *Deathbed Curse and Blessing*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version</u> <u>BL</u>
	<p>And seynt</p> <p>Aldelyne or he dyed cursid all y⁻ e</p> <p>that dyd euy wronge to hys seyde</p> <p>abbey of Mayalmysbury in brekyng (line 100)</p> <p>of eny of ther p^rvelegis / And they y^t (that)</p> <p>helpe that howse shuld have goddis</p> <p>blessyng and hys •/</p>	<p>And saynt aldel //</p> <p>me †† he deyed cursed all them y^c (that) dyde ony wronge in brekyng of the pryvyleges of y^c (that) (line 85)</p> <p>sayde abbeye of Malm- esbury / & them that</p> <p>helpe the hous to mayntene goddess servy //</p> <p>ce shall have goddess blys- syng & hys.</p>

Section 14: *Translation, and Shrine Miracles*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version</u> <u>BL</u>
	<p>And many daies</p> <p>thereafter he was translatyd & put</p> <p>worshipful shryne • Where our (line 105)</p> <p>lord shewith dayly many a greet</p> <p>myracle for hys holy confes- so^r seynt</p> <p>Aldelyne •</p>	<p>And</p> <p>whan he hadlaen longe in y^c (that) erthe he was</p> <p>tra⁻ slated and layed in a full ryche shrine (line 90)</p> <p>where as our lord sheweth dayly for his ho (note: the ‘//’ is missing to indicated broken word)</p> <p>ly seruaunte many fayr myr- acles.</p>

Conclusion

In conclusion, as can be seen, a significant extent of the texts are similar in content, in particular the MS 72 and Caxton. Abbotsford, however, pays particular attention to the nature of Aldhelm's holiness by such terms as 'redolent in virtues'. Whereas, the MS 72 and Caxton, appear to touch upon Aldhelm's holiness, significantly in relation to his miracles, which seems to indicate that the inclusion of Aldhelm's miraculous acts are intended to be more of a promotional device rather than a devotional act of homage to the sacred life of the saint. A great deal of folio space is given by both the MS 72 and Caxton to the Dover Tempest Miracle, whilst the event is not present in the Abbotsford MS. Perhaps the former included the event as it involves the acquisition of a prized relic of a Bible for the monastery.

All three texts include the Chasuble Miracle, which took place in Rome and resulted in a treasured relic, the chasuble, being proudly housed in the monastery at Malmesbury. Yet, somewhat intriguingly, the Abbotsford MS also includes a further miracle performed in Rome that is not recounted in either the MS 72 or Caxton, that of the Baby Miracle. The significance of the miracle being performed in Rome is undeniable, nevertheless, this particular event does not result in physical relic. Perhaps this lack of an object to be venerated in the miraculous event indicates that the author of the Abbotsford MS did not find such acquisitions of relevance, as with the omission of the Dover Tempest Miracle; the Chasuble Miracle is included because of the significance of place, Church of John Lateran in Rome rather than physical reward.

Unlike the MS 72 and Caxton, the Abbotsford MS does not appear to deem it necessary to include the following events: Return to England, Treatise on Easter, Aldhelm becomes Counsellor to Brightwolde Archbishop of Canterbury, Saint Egwine in Chains, Deathbed Curse and Blessing, Translation and Shrine Miracles. The text appears to end abruptly with Aldhelm's Final Years where he is 'buried in his monastery'. In contrast both the MS 72 and Caxton render significant Aldhelm's association with Brightwolde, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose ecclesiastical geographical reach would have included Aldhelm's diocese. Saint Egwine's pilgrimage in chains to Rome is perhaps a further inclusion of the Holy City to emphasise the significance of place.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

Introduction

The aim of this thesis has been to reveal evidence of the nature of holiness in the life of seventh century Saint Aldhelm held within the pages of three fifteenth-century accounts of his life, specifically Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*. The objective has been achieved by transcribing, comparing and analysing each text in relation to the nature of holiness portrayed. The life of Saint Aldhelm has never before been studied in the texts chosen for this research, neither the Abbotsford House MS, the MS 72 of Lambeth Palace Library, nor Caxton's printed version.

Not only has Aldhelm's life in this context remained unapproached by scholars, even as a singular study in one of the codices selected in this thesis, but also a comparison of his life across all three documents has never before been embarked upon. Furthermore, the specific perception of unearthing the nature of Saint Aldhelm's holiness within this perspective has been overlooked by researchers. In order to search for evidence of the nature of Aldhelm's holiness within the aforementioned texts, it was at first necessary to initiate in chapter two by exploring the phenomena that emerged in the thirteenth century as the *Legenda aurea* itself.

The *Legenda aurea*: Beginnings and Transformations

As a profoundly popular evangelical tool penned in Genoa by Jacobus de Voragine, the *Legenda aurea* reflected the Dominican Order's objective to spread the doctrine of Christian belief, and to act as succour to those who already held to the faith.¹ Within the pages of

¹ Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo Da Varagine*, p. 12.

the codex are a collection of lives of saints set to coincide with the Church's year. For example, Saint Stephen, proto-martyr, whose feast day is the twenty-sixth of December, has his *passio* placed in Advent.² Le Goff highlights the significance of the sections of time devoted to the ecclesiastical calendar offered by Voragine in the *Legenda aurea* as providing structure in their journey of faith, from the initial wonder to final redemption, for the individual and the community.³ The *temporal* and *sanctoral* combine to provide the preacher with a ready evangelical device, and the laity with solace, support and words of salvation held within the narrative of each saint. The *sanctoral*, lives of saints, represent a model for the faithful to aspire to in their holy living and devotion to God. Each life is a *speculum*, a mirror, that acts as a reflection the saintly life upon the believer.

However, the content of the *Legenda aurea* relies heavily upon early Desert Fathers and martyrs, which could possibly be out of reach for the average lay person to aspire to. Moreover, the political and social context at the time the *Legenda aurea* was written was proving to challenge the Roman model of ideal holiness with the heretical notion that held up the 'good' person as an aspirational paradigm to aim towards. Rather than the seemingly unachievable archetype offered by Rome, the heretical model offered a much more realistic goal for the faithful.⁴ Perhaps as a marked sign of the turbulent times Voragine included in the *Legenda aurea* the martyrdom of his contemporary and fellow Dominican, Peter of Verona who Voragine claims to have been killed by heretics in Milan whilst pursuing his evangelical duties.⁵

Nonetheless, the popularity of the text remained undiminished which is evidenced by its spread throughout the lands of Europe. As it cut its swathe across the continent the *Legenda aurea* became adopted by the local communities in the form of translations, even the title of the codex became transformed in some instances, for example in Castilian it became the *Gran flos sanctorum*.⁶ As the *Legenda aurea* became blessed, as it were, with the common tongue of indigenous communities it also began to morph into different versions of itself with the inclusion of saints from local cults, even those local cultures would include saints that were not present in other similarly translated versions of the same language. Catalan versions,

² Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 45–50.

³ Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time*, p. 7.

⁴ Michael E. Goodich, *Lives and Miracles of the Saint*, p. 303.

⁵ Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 254–266.

⁶ Beresford, *Dreams of Death*, pp. 159–184.

for example, not only had a variety of extra saints added to the fold of those in the original *Legenda Aurea*, but also were inconsistent in their added content.⁷ Having established the *Legenda Aurea*'s naissance and its charismatic evangelical influence on continental Europe in chapter two, this study then turns to hagiographical tradition present in England in order to explore the idea of sainthood, cults and immortalisation in the form of text and from an insular perspective.

The English Contingent

Chapter three turns its attention away from Europe to the shores of the island of Britain in order to determine the birth and nurturing of sainthood from the arrival of Saint Augustine, at the behest of Pope Gregory the Great in the sixth century.⁸ A mine of information is available in Bede's the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* [the Ecclesiastical History of the English People], written in the eighth century and still an invaluable source of the Anglo-Saxon historical and religious knowledge. In it is found a chronicle of its time as well as a wealth of writing on lives of saints, which includes deeds and miracles carried out by such as Bishop John of Hexham who cures a man who is afflicted with the inability to speak; the Bishop's blessing miraculously restored the man's speech, one of many healing miracles performed by the cleric.⁹ However, despite Bede's allegorical and detailed accounts of events and the miraculous in the feats of both holy men and holy women, his account of Saint Aldhelm is remarkably lacking in such content as is later revealed in Chapter Five, Bede is the first scribe to put ink to vellum to write of Aldhelm.

Lives of saints in early Christianity in the island of Britain were initially repeated orally based on local cults or the knowledge of pilgrims, lives of saints then emerged as written form, such as the *Old English Martyrology* was written a century after Bede's contribution to English hagiography. The text is set out in similar vein to that of the later the *Legenda aurea*, with lives of saints and the liturgical year, also including cosmology.¹⁰ In the tenth-century Aelfric wrote the *Lives of Saints*, which were a collection of sermons written in vernacular English, like the later the *Legenda aurea* it was intended as an evangelical device.¹¹ However, due to monastic

⁷ Sempere, 'On Manuscripts of the *Legenda aurea* in Catalan', pp. 155–178.

⁸ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, pp. 72–89.

⁹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, pp. 266–274.

¹⁰ Rauer, ed. and trans., *The Old English Martyrology*, pp. 1–30.

¹¹ Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300*, p. 16.

decline, between the time of Bede and the Norman invasion hagiographical texts were, in general, rarely produced.¹²

The Conquest of the insular nation brought with it initial derision of the local Anglo-Saxon saints, yet they survived within the memory and culture of the land and its communities. Although, time would show the Norman's changing their tact and supporting the survival of the cult of saints in England, thus the Anglo-Saxon religious nostalgia of devotion to saints helped to rebuild a sense of identity among the weary populous.¹³ The thirteenth century saw the appearance of the *South English Legendary* written in verse, followed by the *Mirk's Festial* in the fourteenth, both are hagiographical works written in English vernacular.¹⁴ The use of the vernacular endeared the common laity to the texts, no doubt the fantastical style of the *Mirk's Festial* added to its appeal.¹⁵ Thus, various forms of what could be regarded as being of similar format and content to Voragine's the *Legenda aurea* existed in England both before, as in the ninth-century *Old English Martyrology*, and since its inception. The emergence of print in the fifteenth century added weight to the availability of hagiographical texts in England, with Caxton producing the first Printed Middle English version of the *Legenda aurea*.¹⁶

Having ascertained the development of hagiography on English soil it emerged that since Bede's account of Aldhelm little is written of him in hagiographic collections until he re-emerges in Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea* in the fifteenth century, even Bede, in his eighth-century account points to the demise of Aldhelm's bishopric after his death and its fall into disrepair, perhaps this could also have rendered the saint all but obsolete.¹⁷ Chapter Four then turns to explore themes studied by scholars pertaining to the nature of holiness in lives of saints in order to perceive of that sacred trait which revived Aldhelm's sanctity in terms of hagiographic production.

It was necessary to focus upon themes which were relevant to Aldhelm's life and what would affect the recording of the nature of his holiness. The transition from oral tradition to

¹² Catherine Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative', pp. 29–66.

¹³ Ridyard, 'Condigna Veneratio', pp. 179–206.

¹⁴ Blanton, Counting Noses and Assessing the Numbers, pp. 233–250.

¹⁵ Ford, *John Mirk's Festial*, p. 9.

¹⁶ Ford, *English Readers of Catholic Saints*, pp. 18–42.

¹⁷ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, pp. 298–299.

text can be fickle in its resolve of the telling of a saint's life. For the scribe decisions involved which events to include, what aspect of the saint's persona should be solidified in the written word, and what message is the account intended to emanate to the reader. There is also the perception that once the saint's life becomes text it loses its organic status, that had been so vibrant in the oral tradition, as if once set in stone, as it were, the life remains stagnant in its content and style.¹⁸ Yet, the written life also possesses the quality of promoting a saint's life, of spreading their story widely, and providing the reader, or read to, with an intimacy between the faithful and the saint, perhaps even a longing for the holiness in the written word to be reflected upon the believer, after all, the sanctity held within the page is the yearned for essence of sainthood.¹⁹

During the early medieval period both a saint's lineage and geographical location could have significant effect upon their sanctity and promotion to sainthood. In the northern communities of Europe sanctity rested predominantly with the heroic model of sainthood, readily present in the lives of royalty, nobles or those of ecclesiastical rank. Whereas, the southern model favoured those individuals who possessed an altruistic, humble quality of sanctity.²⁰ The relevance to life of Aldhelm lies in his royal lineage, being of the House of Wessex, and his geographical location in Malmesbury, close to the seat of Roman Christianity in Canterbury. Therefore, Aldhelm could be said as having his finger on the pulse of sainthood in the seventh century, as well as having considerable influence regarding his regal connections. Yet, as later chapters demonstrated Aldhelm's saintly persona appears to possess both heroic and humble qualities, heroic in the accounts of his miracles, humble in the nature of holiness in his personality trait.

The nature of holiness present in saints' lives in the medieval period range from *specula*, the reflection of Christ in the life of the saint, thus reflected via them to the faithful more commonly seen in suffering and martyrdom, to *exempla*, the example given of holiness embodied in the personality and holy living of a confessor. The themes explored reveal slight, and not so slight, changes in style and content of a saint's life regarding the nature of holiness and perception of saintly quality. Saint Aldhelm was not destined to be a martyr, therefore it appeared that the perception of the nature of his sanctity lay within the qualities revealed in the

¹⁸ Heffernan, *Sacred Biography* pp. 3–37.

¹⁹ Ashton, *The Generation of Identity*, pp. 7–9.

²⁰ Cazelles, 'Introduction' pp. 1–17.

writing of his life, Chapter Five addresses this conundrum with a comparison of the original writings of the life of Saint Aldhelm.

Saint Aldhelm's Role in Original Sources of his Life

As mentioned earlier, Bede was the first to write an account of Aldhelm in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* [the Ecclesiastical History of the English People], written a mere two decades after the saint's death. Thus, Bede's knowledge of Aldhelm would be quite current, despite Bede and Aldhelm living at either end of the country there was a Northumbrian connection between the two in the form of Aldhelm's involvement in the baptism of King Aldfrith of Northumbria.²¹ Moreover, Bede would have gained information regarding Aldhelm by word of mouth from the various clergy who would attend his monastery at Jarrow with information from the south.²²

Bede's brief account of Aldhelm focuses primarily on his literary output, ecclesiastical status and geographical location. Aldhelm's holiness is not referred to, or is he named as a saint, yet the holy aspect of his writings is praised. There is no mention of Aldhelm's pilgrimage to Rome nor any of his miracles. It appears that the purpose of Aldhelm's inclusion in the text was of ecclesiastic purpose rather than championing the life of a saint. For instance, the section which includes Aldhelm also refers to the appointments of Eadbert and Ella as South Saxon bishops, and Daniel and Aldhelm in the West of the county.²³

Not until the twelfth century does Aldhelm then appear in a text in the form of Faricius of Abingdon's Latin prose version as the *Vita S. Aldhelmi* [the Life of Saint Aldhelm]. In contrast to Bede's brief mention, although his contribution is acknowledged, Faricius's text is entirely dedicated to the saint.²⁴ Replete with biblical comparison, the application of exegetic models to the life of Aldhelm serve the purpose of highlighting Aldhelm's virtues, the saint's life being a reflection of honourable biblical figures. Faricius's exaggerated style emphasises Aldhelm's virtuous nature from his early years, as well as recounting his pilgrimage to Rome and a number of the miracles he performed both during his lifetime and after his death at his shrine. Clearly, then, Faricius's the *Vita S. Aldhelmi* is intended to celebrate the nature of the

²¹ Blanton, Counting Noses and Assessing the Numbers, pp. 233–250.

²² George Hardin Brown, *A Companion to Bede*, p. 9–10.

²³ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, p. 298.

²⁴ Giles, *Sancti Aldhelmi opera*, p. 93–147.

holiness of Saint Aldhelm in his personality trait and supernatural performances of miracle. Thus, according to Faricius, Aldhelm was splendidly gifted with the sacred attributes which define the nature of holiness.

Eight years after the death of Faricius, there was to follow a further account of the life of Aldhelm, this time in the form of William of Malmesbury's *De gesta pontificum anglorum* [The Deeds of the Bishops of England]. Although not a text completely dedicated to the life of Aldhelm, he does play a major role in the document. Rather than relying on hearsay, as William claims was the strategy of Faricius, William travelled around England determined to record the unsung actions of bishops such as Aldhelm, who was the patron saint of the Abbey at Malmesbury where William was based.²⁵ Not averse to hearsay himself, in fact praising its value, William also gathered information for his text from Chronicles of the Anglo-Saxon period, claiming that his would be a true and well researched document.

Faricius and William's accounts of Saint Aldhelm are similar in content, yet William's style is more perfunctory than Faricius's florid tone. Aldhelm's virtues and indeed holiness are given weight but not with exegetic reference. Instead, William champions Aldhelm as one of the great abbots and bishops of his time in both his 'deeds' and evidence of his holiness personified, as with Faricius, in his virtuous nature and miracles. Sixteen distinct areas and events in Aldhelm's life were identified, that would prove useful in detecting the nature of Aldhelm's holiness in the later texts, these include Aldhelm's royal connections, his acts as Abbott and Bishop, his pilgrimage to Rome and subsequent miracles.

Chapter Six moves from the twelfth century to the fifteenth in the form of three lives of Saint Aldhelm which appear in Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*: the Abbotsford House MS, the Lambeth Palace MS 72 and Caxton's printed version. Never before explored, this chapter considers the content and style of each account and makes a comparison of each of the events that had been identified in Chapter Five across the texts. It was found that although similar in content and style there were anomalies between the three documents. All three include Aldhelm's royal lineage, his ecclesiastical destiny and his pilgrimage to Rome, but to varying degrees. In style, the Abbotsford MS proved to have more focus on

²⁵ Preest, trans., *Gesta*, p. 223–265.

Aldhelm's holy qualities, whereas the MS 72 and Caxton read more like an account of his actions. The content of the MS 72 and Caxton are very similar, even echoing each other's phrases at times, for example, their accounts of the Tempest Miracle at Dover appear equal at first glance, yet there are certain nuances in the language used which suggests preferred emphasis of the composer, such as Caxton (lines 53–56) describing the ship as 'laden' with goods, whereas the MS 72 does not emphasise the amount of merchandise on board.

More significantly, the choice of inclusion of miracles in each text proved to be intriguing. The Abbotsford MS is the only text to include the Baby Miracle performed in Rome, yet a further miracle in Rome is included in all three documents, that of the Chasuble Miracle. Conversely, whilst the MS 72 and Caxton include the Tempest Miracle, it is not present in the Abbotsford MS, however, all three miracles are accounted for by Faricius and William. Having determined the content and style of the documents, and divided them into relevant comparable sections, chapter seven then analyses these findings in order to identify evidence of the nature of Aldhelm's holiness within the texts.

The Nature of Aldhelm's Holiness as Identified in the Texts

In order to determine the nature of holiness held within the texts, Chapter Seven first established a definition by considering the nuances of the sacred gift as offered by Augustine then later Anselm.²⁶ The nature of holiness is given as levels of wonder, the highest level being that of the miraculous, the supernatural, not against nature but having reached the spiritual level of nature where the presence of God is palpable, for example in the Eucharist.²⁷ This definition is keenly relevant to the miracle Aldhelm performed whilst saying Mass at the Church of John Lateran, the Chasuble Miracle. The preternatural determination of the event is emphasised by a combination of the consecration of the host and the subsequent sunbeam that shone through the window, nature manifesting the spirit of God in the form of a sunbeam on which Aldhelm hung his vestment.

The nature of Aldhelm's holiness is expressed in the texts both explicitly and implicitly. Explicitly in the use of such vocabulary as 'holy' and 'miracle', which appear in all three

²⁶ William Babcock, trans., *The Works of Saint Augustine*, pp. 505–517. Regarding Anselm see also, William M. Aird, 'Saint Anselm of Canterbury and Charismatic Authority', *Religions*, 5.1 (2013): 90–108.

²⁷ Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*, p. 13.

documents, yet, it was found that the Abbotsford MS is more explicit than the MS 72 and Caxton, using such expressions as ‘redolent with virtue’ (lines 53–57). The chapter therefore identifies two principal areas of research within the texts: The nature of holiness revealed in Aldhelm’s performance of miracles, and his early life and ecclesiastical promotion. The three miracles identified, the Baby Miracle, the Chasuble Miracle and the Tempest Miracle, each reveal the supernatural qualities in Aldhelm’s nature, but also his holy personality trait. The baby miracle not only sees a nine day old baby speak in response to Aldhelm’s question, thus quelling the fraught situation of the Pope as being accused of fathering the child, but also Aldhelm acts as spiritual diplomat in the turbulent setting of the Pope’s court. Yet, from this miracle no object is retained unlike in the Chasuble and Tempest miracles that provide Malmesbury not only with evidence of Aldhelm’s miraculous acts but also as tangible relics, in the form of a chasuble and a Bible, which would have been a keen draw for pilgrims to witness evidence of the nature of Aldhelm’s holiness.

The texts also reveal the nature of Aldhelm’s holiness depicted in his holy living as a youth, even surpassing his masters in his education he remained ever humble, this is emphasised by the Abbotsford MS, which also points to his sacred actions when as a clergyman setting to a task he applied himself meekly, worked diligently and completed that task humbly (lines 15–16). Therefore, the texts have revealed the nature of Aldhelm’s holiness as perceived in the fifteenth century and in the context of Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my contribution to research and knowledge in the field of hagiography and the history of the book lies in the originality of the research, the Abbotsford MS in particular has only been studied by one other person, Simon Horobin, specific to the life of Saint George.²⁸ The contribution is innovative in that it draws out the nature of Aldhelm’s holiness in a cross comparison of his life. The innovation is a comparison specific to Middle English versions of the *Legenda aurea* never before undertaken in this context. Further research is to undertake an edition, with the intention of publication, of MS 72 as the central text in a comparison to the Abbotsford MS and Caxton as it is the earlier of the three. A further possible

²⁸Simon Horobin, ‘A Manuscript Found in the Library of Abbotsford House’ :130–162.

research direction could involve a comparison of the content of Capgrave's life of Aldhelm, albeit not a the *Legenda aurea* offering, but nonetheless being relatively contemporaneous with the texts it could offer fruitful research.

Appendices

Content

Appendix A:

Comparison Table of Original Sources of the Life of Saint Aldhelm: Bede's the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Faricius of Abbingdon's the *Vita Aldelmi*, and William of Malmesbury's *The Deeds of the Bishops of England*

Appendix B:

Comparison Table of the Content of the Three Fifteenth-Century Middle English Versions of the Life of Saint Aldhelm in the *Legenda aurea*

Appendix A

Comparison Table of Original Sources of the Life of Saint Aldhelm: Bede's the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Faricius of Abbingdon's the *Vita Aldelmi*, and William of Malmesbury's *The Deeds of the Bishops of England*

<u>Bede</u>	<u>Faricius</u>	<u>William of Malmesbury</u>
No	Royal blood	Royal blood
No	Youth	Youth
Abbot of Maelduib (Malmesbury)	Sent to monastery	Sent to monastery
No	Pope, Rome and Privileges	Pope, Rome and Privileges
No	Chasuble	Chasuble
No	Baby miracle	Baby miracle
No	Return to England, not including journey	Return to England, including journey
Treatise on the date of Easter	Treatise on the date of Easter	Treatise on the date of Easter
No	Counsellor to Brightwolde archbishop of Canterbury	Counsellor to Brightwolde archbishop of Canterbury
No	Dover tempest miracle	Dover tempest miracle
no	Holiness (Particular emphasis on virtues)	Holiness
Scant	Final years	Final years
No	Bishops Egwine's pilgrimage to Rome in chains	Bishops Egwine's pilgrimage to Rome in chains
No	Deathbed curse and blessing (scant)	Deathbed curse and blessing
No	Translation of body and shrine miracles	Translation of body and shrine miracles
Ending	Ending	Ending

Appendix B:

Comparison Table of the Content of Three Fifteenth-Century Middle English Versions of the Life of Saint Aldhelm in the *Legenda aurea*

<u>The Abbotsford MS</u>	<u>The Lambeth Palace MS 72</u>	<u>Caxton's Printed Version</u> <u>BL</u>
Royal blood	Royal blood	Royal blood
Youth	Youth	Youth
Sent to monastery	Sent to monastery	Sent to monastery
Pope, Rome and Privileges	Pope, Rome and Privileges	Pope, Rome and Privileges
Chasuble	Chasuble	Chasuble
Baby miracle	<u>no</u>	<u>no</u>
<u>No</u>	Return to England	Return to England
<u>No</u>	Treatise on the date of Easter	Treatise on the date of Easter
<u>No</u>	Counsellor to Brightwolde archbishop of Canterbury	Counsellor to Brightwolde archbishop of Canterbury
<u>No</u>	Dover tempest miracle	Dover tempest miracle
Holiness	<u>scant</u>	<u>scant</u>
Final years	Final years	Final years
<u>No</u>	Bishops Egwine's pilgrimage to Rome in chains	Bishops Egwine's pilgrimage to Rome in chains
<u>No</u>	Deathbed curse and blessing	Deathbed curse and blessing
<u>No</u>	Translation of body and shrine miracles	Translation of body and shrine miracles
Partial ending damage	Ending	Ending

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